

88 B 14161

SUB Göttingen
100 039 09X

7

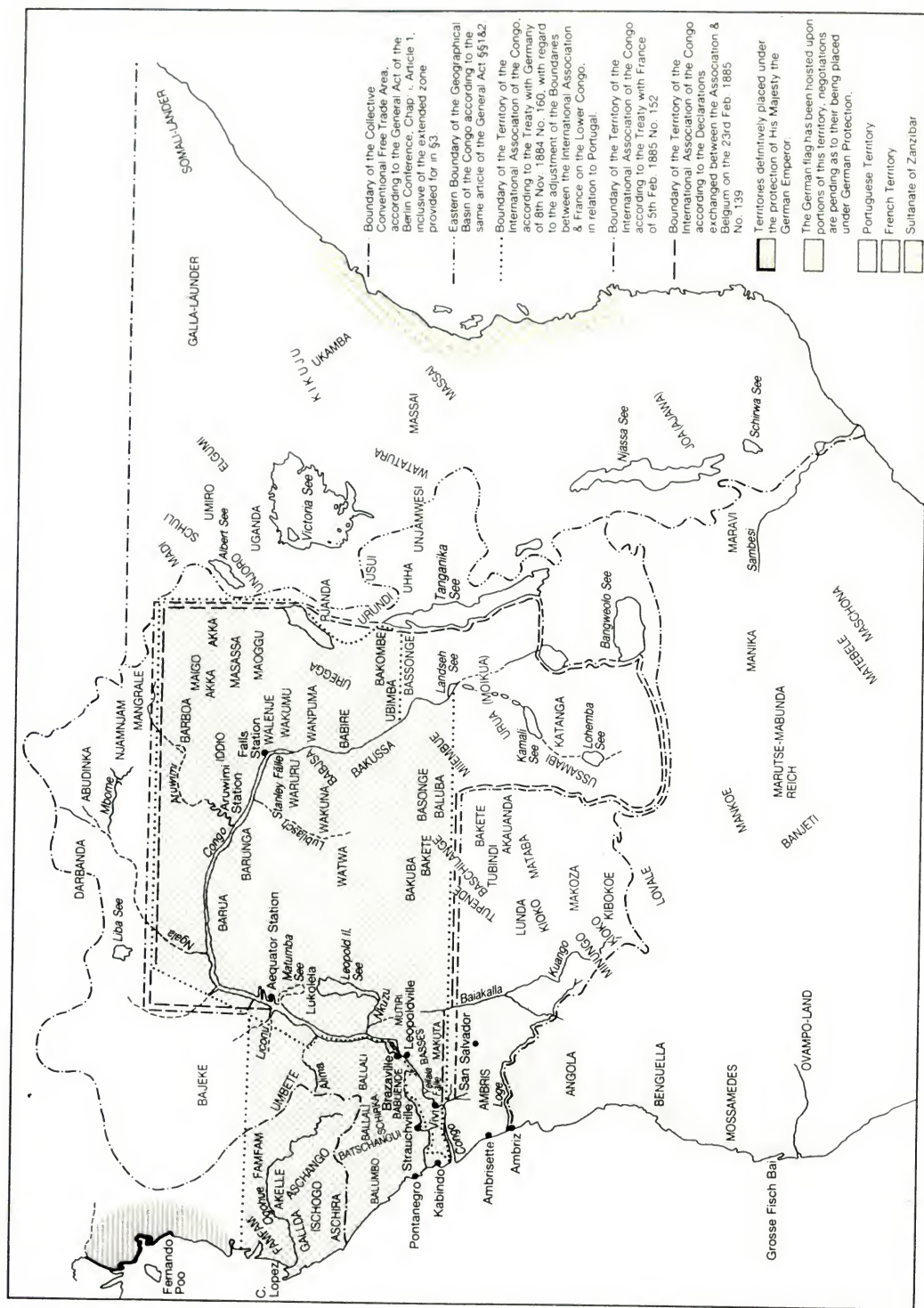


88 B 14161

9495



Bismarck, Europe, and Africa



MAP I. Central Africa, as the participants knew it

After the map by F. Friederichsen, annexed to the 9th protocol of the Berlin Conference

Bismarck, Europe, and Africa

*The Berlin Africa Conference 1884-1885 and
the Onset of Partition*

Edited by
STIG FÖRSTER, WOLFGANG J. MOMMSEN,
and
RONALD ROBINSON

THE GERMAN HISTORICAL INSTITUTE LONDON
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

1988

Oxford University Press, Walton Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

Oxford New York Toronto

Delhi Bombay Calcutta Madras Karachi

Peking Taipei Singapore Hong Kong Tokyo

Nairobi Dar es Salaam Cape Town

Melbourne Auckland

and associated companies in

Beirut Berlin Ibadan Nicosia

Oxford is a trade mark of Oxford University Press

Published in the United States

by Oxford University Press, New York

© German Historical Institute London, 1988

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of Oxford University Press

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Bismarck, Europe, and Africa: the Berlin

Africa Conference 1884-1885 and the onset
of partition.

1. Africa—Colonization—History

2. World politics—19th century

I. Förster, Stig II. Mommsen, Wolfgang J.

III. Robinson, Ronald, 1920- IV. German

Historical Institute

960' .23 DT31

ISBN 0-19-920500-0

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Bismarck, Europe, and Africa: the Berlin Africa Conference 1884-1885

and the onset of partition/edited by Stig Förster, Wolfgang J.

Mommsen, and Ronald Robinson.

"The German Historical Institute, London."

Includes index.

1. Africa—Foreign relations—Europe. 2. Europe—Foreign
relations—Africa. 3. Africa—Colonization. 4. Berlin West Africa
Conference (1884-1885). 5. Bismarck, Otto, Fürst von, 1815-1898.

I. Förster, Stig. II. Mommsen, Wolfgang J., 1930-

III. Robinson, Ronald Edward, 1920- IV. German Historical
Institute in London.

DT29.B57 1988 327.406—dc19 87-22941

ISBN 0-19-920500-0

Set by Downdell Ltd., Abingdon, Oxon.

Printed in Great Britain by

St. Edmundsbury Press, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk



PREFACE

The Berlin Africa Conference in 1884-5 stands at an important juncture both in the history of international relations and in the history of European imperialism. Up to this time the Continental States of Western Europe had pursued expansion overseas as a mere corollary of European power politics. It is true that important parts of the colonial possessions of the great powers had changed hands from time to time as a consequence of shifts in the European balance of power, for instance in 1756 and during the Napoleonic wars. But the stability of the European system held together by the delicate mechanism of the so-called *balance of power* had never been exposed to severe strain by policies of imperialist expansion overseas, save, perhaps, by repeated Russian threats to the semi-independent status of the Ottoman Empire, which had been the cause of repeated conflicts between the powers, notably the Crimean War from 1853 to 1856. In the early 1880s this situation was changed by the French seizure of Tunisia in 1881 and the English occupation of Egypt in 1882, swiftly followed by Imperial Germany's move to acquire colonial possessions, however indirectly, in different regions of the globe, notably in Africa. As Egypt had been nominally subject to the overlordship of the Sultan of Constantinople and continued to do so even under British occupation, the conflict over Egypt between France and Britain had from the start an international dimension. In terms of international law the other powers could claim a say in this matter also, and accordingly the Egyptian question provided them with leverage to promote their own interests overseas.

The situation was exacerbated by Egypt's deplorable financial situation and the fact that a commission representing the European bondholders and dominated by the European governments controlled the greater part of her tax revenues. This constellation strengthened the hands of Bismarck in his increasingly tough encounters with the British government in 1883 and 1884, after his initial cautious moves to get British acquiescence in the establishment of protected territories in East Africa and in Angra Pequena had come to naught. The international situation was further aggravated by de Brazza's frenetic endeavours to establish French colonial control in West Africa near the mouth of the Congo river, while at the same time Leopold II of Belgium attempted to persuade the European powers and the United States to give the International Congo Association the exclusive right to establish a huge colony in the Congo basin on the basis of free trade ostensibly to foster humanitarian purposes.

The British were concerned about the advances made by de Brazza in West Africa which seemed to threaten the informal preponderance in this region which they had enjoyed in the past. They therefore reacted by encouraging Portugal to reassert its traditional claims to control all coastal territory south of the Congo estuary, but also by more or less deliberately forestalling Bismarck's diplomatic moves regarding the possible establishment of the German Chartered Company in Angra Pequena, a region which the Cape Colony claimed to be within its own sphere of interest. This move was strongly resented by the other powers and provided the stimulus for the suggestion to convene an international conference. Its purpose was to regulate the procedures according to which the powers should be entitled to claim formal control of colonial territories, in West Africa and elsewhere.

The conflict between Great Britain and France over the future of Egypt on the one hand and the cluster of conflicting interests in Africa highlighted by the clash between Imperial Germany and Britain over Angra Pequena and the conflicting claims by France, Portugal, and the King of Belgium over the territories in the Congo basin were no longer seen exclusively as colonial issues; they directly affected the status of the great powers involved. Bismarck, at any rate, believed that it was imperative to teach the British government a lesson and make it clear that Great Britain could not claim control of huge territories in Africa and elsewhere without effective occupation. There were also other reasons for his attempt to try to bring about a colonial alliance with France, and possibly with other European powers as well, against Britain's allegedly preposterous intransigence, which seemingly violated the foremost principle of the European Concert of Powers, namely respect for the vital interests of others whenever one's own interests were not directly affected. Seen from this vantage point the Berlin Africa Conference marks an important stage in the history of Anglo-German relations; the negotiations preceding the Conference signified a slump in Anglo-German relations. However, during the Conference itself it became clear that Great Britain and Imperial Germany in fact had far more in common with each other in imperialist affairs than either power had with France. *1884-5*

These brief observations should suffice to show that the Berlin Africa Conference was in the first place a major event of European international affairs, although its agenda was primarily, if not exclusively concerned with African affairs. For the first time the United States participated in an international conference convened by a European power. At the same time, however, it was an event which very much affected the future of the African peoples, although they were not even indirectly represented at the conference table in the Reich Chancellery. The Conference was to reach an international agreement to extend the principles of international law and the informal rules according to which the European System of Powers operated in the African continent which so far had been largely *extra legem*. Most, if not all observers agreed that this attempt turned out to be a spectacular failure, and it could be argued that it was merely a pretext for facilitating and morally justifying the establishment or the extension of colonial rule in Africa. Nevertheless it did legitimize European expansion, though only in terms of international law, as it was understood by the statesmen and the general public of Europe alike. Whether the Conference itself initiated the process of partition, or perhaps contributed to its implementation at an accelerating pace, is a matter of considerable dispute. There are those, such as Professor Hargreaves, who deny that the Conference had any real impact on the partition of Africa. Conversely it is argued that the Berlin Africa Conference started the process of partition. From the viewpoint of the African nations the Conference of Berlin in 1884-5 appears to have been if not the actual starting point of partition (which was by then already well under way) then at least the occasion on which partition received the effective seal of approval by the European powers. Seen from this vantage point it was a major landmark in the history of imperialism even though the direct impact on the process of colonial expansion is questionable.

Certainly the treaties of partition agreed upon in Berlin outside the conference hall did substantially accelerate the process of imperialist expansion. However, it is less clear whether the principle of *effective occupation* invoked by Bismarck in the early stages

of the diplomatic negotiations against the British claim of imperial preponderance in all regions of the globe as yet not effectively claimed by the colonial powers did in fact foster the process of establishing formal colonial rule. For it immediately proved unworkable in practical terms, as the colonial powers so far nowhere sufficiently controlled the hinterland of their colonial possessions and showed little inclination to do so in the near future. Be this as it may, it appears that the Berlin Africa Conference will have to be seen if not as an important juncture in the actual process of territorial partition of Africa, then at least as an event which highlighted this process and made it an integral part of international politics.

The great divergence of views among historians about the import of the Berlin Africa Conference gave rise to the idea of convening an international symposium on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the Berlin Conference in order to attempt a critical reassessment of its achievements and its consequences in the context both of imperialist expansion and of European power politics. In 1983 the German Historical Institute London responded to proposals of this nature made simultaneously by Imanuel Geiß (Bremen), Ronald Robinson and Anthony Kirk-Greene (Oxford), and Henk Wesseling (Leiden). It arranged an international symposium which took place from 5 to 9 February 1985 at the *Deutsche Stiftung für internationale Entwicklung* at the Villa Borsig in Berlin-Tegel. The symposium was attended by about fifty scholars from Great Britain, the Federal Republic of Germany, the United States, Canada, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Nigeria, Namibia, and Zaire.

In 1884 no Africans were invited to the Conference, except that, for tactical reasons, the British had initially considered whether or not the Sultan of Zanzibar should be represented. In 1985 the full participation of African scholars was secured. The contributions to the symposium turned out to be of the highest academic calibre and the debates were most stimulating.¹ The collection of essays presented in this volume is based upon these contributions, although most of them have been substantially revised in the light of the discussion and in some cases considerably extended. In their entirety they represent the first comprehensive account of the history of the Africa Conference of 1885, its proceedings, and its significance for Europe and Africa alike.

Naturally the towering figure of Bismarck, the main architect of the Conference, is given a prominent place; his policies are investigated from different viewpoints by K. J. Bade, W. J. Mommsen, H. Pogge von Strandmann, and R. Robinson. But the roles of the other actors in the diplomatic arena are also analysed in depth. More importantly, the fundamental forces which determined the course of events far more than did the statesmen and diplomats are examined. This applies especially to the economic factors which brought about a gradual swing from informal to formal control and to the missionary activities which in a sense paved the way for the establishment of formal colonial rule at a later stage. In this larger context the proceedings of the Berlin Africa Conference, and in particular the principles of colonial rule agreed upon in the Berlin Act of 1885, are assessed in detail. The impact of imperialist penetration upon the African peoples in West and Central Africa who were directly or indirectly affected by the decisions of the Conference is an essential part of the story. In a number of case

¹ See Andrew Porter, 'The Berlin West Africa Conference of 1884-85 Revisited: A Report', in *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 14 (1985), pp. 83-92;

Stig Förster, 'The Berlin West Africa Conference 1884/85', in *German Historical Institute London, Bulletin*, 19 (Summer 1985), pp. 3-12.

studies of particular regions, the reactions of the African peoples to the European intruders are further explored, thereby providing a broader basis for a full evaluation of the significance and consequences of the Conference from different angles.

These considerations govern the arrangement of the contributions to this volume. In an introductory chapter, 'The Conference in Berlin and the Future in Africa, 1884-1885', Ronald Robinson assesses the significance of the Conference in the light of contemporary European power politics as influenced by the Egyptian question and the rivalries between the major powers involved, both in Europe and at the periphery. At the same time he takes into account the history of the partition of Africa. Finally he describes the consequences for the Africans of the decisions related to or arrived at during the Conference.

The first part, 'European Interests in Africa', deals with the processes of European penetration, both informal and formal, which were already under way well before the Berlin Africa Conference, C. Newbury and A. D. Nzemeke discuss the role of trade and the economic interests involved; H. Gründer considers the missionary activities which to a certain degree paved the way for colonial rule of a more formal nature; H. Pogge von Strandmann and K. J. Bade describe the interplay of political, social, economic, and ideological factors which brought about the new wave of imperialist expansion in the metropolitan countries, examining the case of Imperial Germany.

In the second part, 'The Origins of the Conference', the political events which eventually led to the convening of the Conference are discussed, as seen from the viewpoint of each of the major powers involved. W. J. Mommsen analyses the strategic considerations which induced Bismarck to call for an international conference on African affairs; A. S. Kanya-Forstner describes France's expansionist policies in West Africa on the eve of the Conference, which greatly irritated her rivals; G. N. Sanderson assesses the attempts of the British government to defend its policies of informal rule by indirect means, involving among other things the co-operation with Portugal which led to the conclusion of the abortive Anglo-Portuguese Treaty of 24 February 1884; G. Clarence-Smith analyses the part played by the Iberian countries in European imperialism in Africa. J. Stengers paints a lively picture of Leopold II and his International Congo Association, who turned out to be the main winner in this intricate power game.

The third part is devoted to an analysis of 'The Issues at the Conference', which were the subject of almost three months of rather complex and sometimes rather confused diplomatic negotiations in Berlin. It should perhaps be noted that few of the diplomats had any knowledge of actual conditions in Africa, and that they had to rely on experts throughout. They were, in fact, primarily interested in laying down an international code of conduct for future territorial expansion, as G. de Courcel demonstrates with considerable precision. I. Geiß deals with the main issues that were discussed in Berlin. On the table were proposals establishing a regime of unrestricted free trade in the whole Congo basin and its adjacent territories regardless of who had effective possession, the internationalization of the Congo and Niger rivers and their tributaries, the free and unrestricted operation in the Congo basin of all religious denominations alike (including Islam, as the representative of the Ottoman Empire was quick to insist, but, of course, excluding all African religions, which were considered mere superstition), the neutrality of the Congo in the case of a major

European war, and, perhaps more importantly, the abrogation of the slave trade and the establishment of basic rules for a fair and humanitarian treatment of the indigenous population. None of the powers was prepared to accept all these proposals outright. The French worked hard to water down the principle of free trade, the British managed to restrict the principle of effective occupation to coasts rather than hinterlands, while the Germans got their way in letting Leopold get the largest piece of the cake, in the mistaken assumption that this would be the most convenient solution for German commercial interests. In particular the American representatives strongly supported the package of free trade and humanitarian principles, but, as G. Shepperson and P. Duignan show convincingly, not without ulterior motives notably of an economic nature. In general, the record of the Berlin Africa Conference, as far as humanitarian principles go, is a rather dismal one, as can be gathered from S. Miers's and L. H. Gann's contributions. J. D. Hargreaves gives a comprehensive account of the various bilateral agreements regarding the future boundaries in West Africa agreed upon at Berlin, though not at the Conference table. They went a long way toward effectively implementing the actual partition of Africa. J. Fisch gives an assessment of the Conference from the viewpoint of international law. Though the general principles of colonial rule agreed at Berlin proved largely ineffective, the Berlin Conference marks the beginning of the application of international law to the process of European expansion in Africa. It set a precedent for more modest, but more effective attempts to bring colonial rule under the sway of international law in future. This section is rounded off by E. Bendikat's survey of contemporary reports on the Conference in the international press. Contemporaries, it seems, had a higher respect for the achievements of the Conference than we ourselves can muster after a century of imperialist rule in Africa which by and large flagrantly violated most of these principles.

The next part deals with perhaps the most difficult aspect of all, namely 'African Reactions to Imperial Invasion'. This is a vast field and, besides, the impact of colonial penetration cannot be assessed in the short term at all, and certainly not with direct reference to the Berlin Africa Conference, which only with hindsight can be seen to have been an important step toward colonial rule.

Two general papers, one by M. Crowder, an expert on African resistance, the other by an anthropologist, E. Hopkins, discuss the general preconditions which determined the reactions of the African peoples to European penetration. The overriding principle was the preservation of the indigenous communities as far as possible. At times this necessitated collaboration, at times resistance; the two strategies were not as far apart as one would assume at first sight. Moreover, the African peoples often succeeded in manipulating the Europeans in the context of local power struggles just as much as the Europeans manipulated the Africans. In any case, the Europeans were more interested in economic advantages than in complete political control. Be this as it may, the African peoples' chances of effectively resisting European rule were, in the long term, slim. All this is borne out by the case studies by A. I. Asiwaju, O. Ikime, Mumbanza mwa Bawele, and A. H. M. Kirk-Greene devoted to Yorubaland and Dahomey, to Nigeria, and to the Western region of the Congo State (today's Zaire). Finally F. Ansprenger points out that the various African peoples had altogether different views of the Europeans, depending on region, time, and local conditions; this factor alone,

not to mention many others, hindered them in forming a united front against European colonial rule.

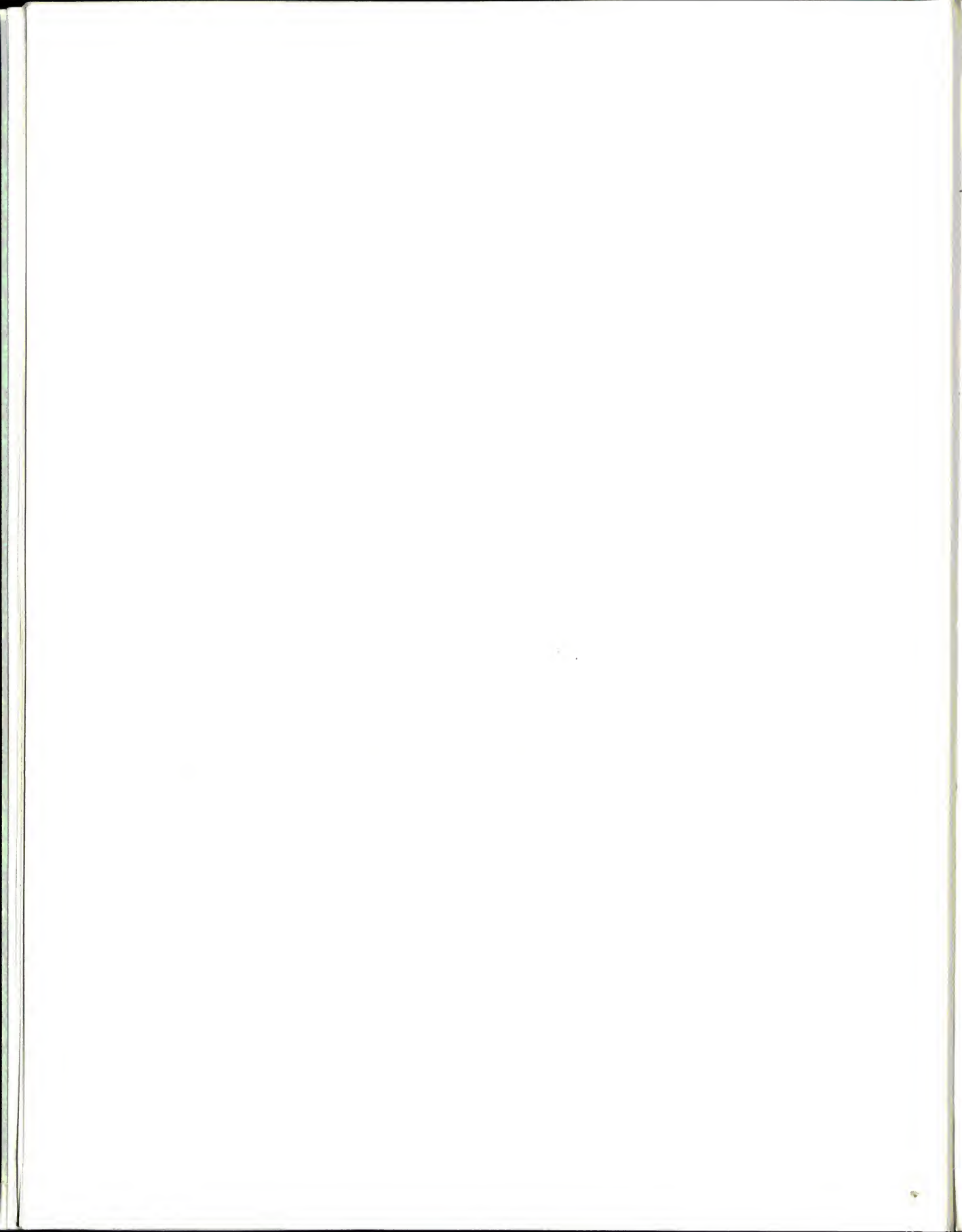
Finally H. L. Wesseling and G. N. Uzoigwe provide general evaluations of the significance of the Berlin Africa Conference, the first from a European, the second from an African vantage point. They do not agree on the actual place to be allotted to the Berlin Africa Conference in the history of the partition. On this point the differences of opinion are as wide as ever. In any case it was an event of major importance which, as Wesseling shows, in some ways can be compared to the Yalta Conference of February 1945, which effectively sanctioned the partition of Germany and Europe by the allied powers, although it surely did not bring it about. The place which the Berlin Africa Conference deserves in the history of European imperialism, but also in the history of Africa, surely will remain a much disputed issue for a long time to come. But the contributions in this volume may help to lay the foundation for a more objective and more thorough evaluation of this international gathering, long neglected by historians who were misled by the assumption that the ineffectiveness of most of its formal resolutions had rendered it unimportant *per se*.

The very fact that the Berlin Africa Conference has been largely neglected by historians—so far there have only been two rather traditional accounts, one by Sybil E. Crowe and the other by G. König—would appear to justify the publication of the essays collected in this volume. They will certainly help to bring about a fuller understanding of the significance and the consequences of the Conference, far beyond the field of traditional diplomatic history and the history of international law, the two aspects under which it is usually dealt with. They also may contribute to the achievement of an higher degree of understanding between African and European historians about the history of European expansion, which so deeply affected both African and European societies.

Without the co-operation and constant help of many English colleagues neither the preparation of the conference at Berlin-Tegel nor the publication of this book would have been possible. Thanks are due in particular to Professor Ronald Robinson, who not only provided invaluable advice and numerous suggestions, but also was willing to share the burden and the responsibility of editing this volume jointly with Dr Stig Förster and myself. In addition to his assistance in organizing the original symposium at Berlin-Tegel in February 1985, Dr Förster undertook the burdensome task of editing the manuscripts (especially those which had to be translated), rearranging and often checking the notes, and corresponding with the contributors, among others, in order to sort out remaining problems in the texts. Further we should like to express our gratitude to the director and the staff of the *Deutsche Stiftung für internationale Entwicklung* in Berlin-Tegel. The Villa Borsig proved to be a most agreeable conference centre, and offered an unusual degree of hospitality in beautiful surroundings. We also thank the *Regierende Bürgermeister* of Berlin, Eberhard Diepgen, and the *Senator für Wissenschaft* Professor Kewenig for financial assistance which enabled us to invite a few more African scholars to Berlin than would otherwise have been possible. Thanks are also due to Professor F. Ansprenger, Free University of Berlin, and to Professor Imanuel Geiß, Bremen University, for their assistance in organizing the symposium. Further we would like to express our gratitude to the director and the staff of the German Historical Institute London; without their assistance neither the symposium nor the publication of its

proceedings would have been possible. Special thanks go to Dr Angela Davies for her editorial assistance. This refers in particular to her painstaking precision in revising the translations from the German and her careful reading of the proofs. Klaus Roewer has assisted in editing the maps, figures, and tables. Kirsten Zirkel undertook the burdensome task of compiling the index. Last but not least we should like to express our gratitude to P. H. Sutcliffe and Anne Ashby, who made it possible for this book to be published by Oxford University Press.

W. J. MOMMSEN



CONTENTS

<i>List of Maps, Figures, and Tables</i>	xvii
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xix
1. The Conference in Berlin and the Future in Africa, 1884-1885 R. ROBINSON	1
A. EUROPEAN INTERESTS IN AFRICA	
2. On the Margins of Empire: The Trade of Western Africa, 1875-1890 C. NEWBURY	35
3. Free Trade and Territorial Partition in Nineteenth-century West Africa: Course and Outcome A. D. NZEMEKE	59
4. Chartered Companies and the Transition from Informal Sway to Colonial Rule in Africa J. FLINT	69
5. Christian Missionary Activities in Africa in the Age of Imperialism and the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 H. GRÜNDER	85
6. Consequences of the Foundation of the German Empire: Colonial Expansion and the Process of Political- Economic Rationalization H. POGGE VON STRANDMANN	105
7. Imperial Germany and West Africa: Colonial Movement, Business Interests, and Bismarck's 'Colonial Policies' K. J. BADE	121
B. THE ORIGINS OF THE CONFERENCE	
8. Bismarck, the Concert of Europe, and the Future of West Africa, 1883-1885 W. J. MOMMSEN	151
9. French African Priorities and the Berlin West Africa Conference A. S. KANYA-FORSTNER	171
10. British Informal Empire, Imperial Ambitions, Defensive Strategies, and the Anglo-Portuguese Congo Treaty of February 1884 G. N. SANDERSON	189

11. The Portuguese and Spanish Roles in the Scramble for Africa:
An Economic Interpretation 215
G. CLARENCE-SMITH
12. Leopold II and the *Association Internationale du Congo* 229
J. STENGERS

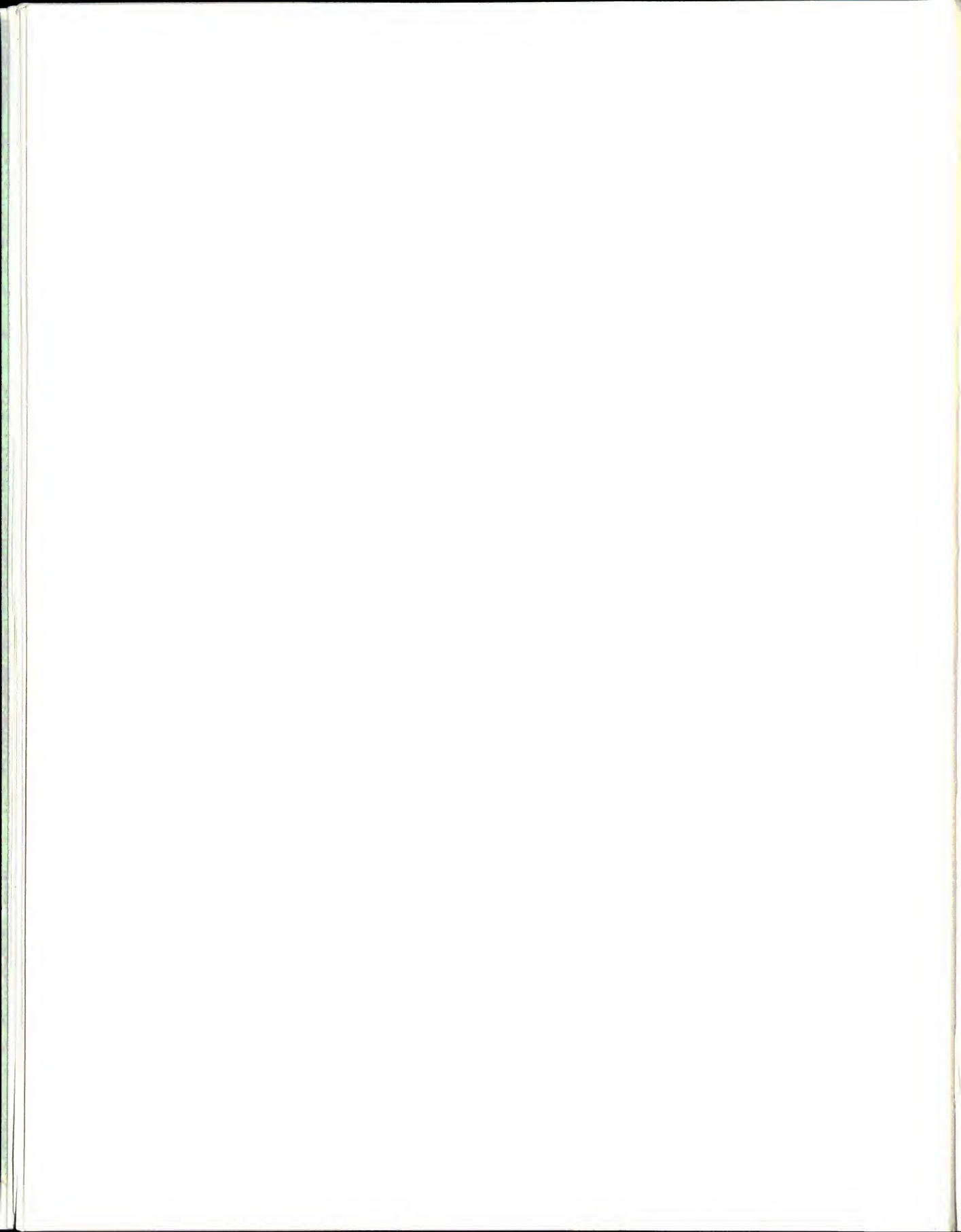
C. THE ISSUES AT THE CONFERENCE

13. The Berlin Act of 26 February 1885 247
G. DE COURCEL
14. Free Trade, Internationalization of the Congo Basin,
and the Principle of Effective Occupation 263
I. GEISS
15. Aspects of American Interest in the Berlin Conference 281
G. SHEPPERSON
16. The USA, the Berlin Conference, and its Aftermath
1884-1885 295
P. DUIGNAN
17. The Berlin Conference, West African Boundaries, and the
Eventual Partition 313
J. D. HARGREAVES
18. The Berlin Conference and the Humanitarian Conscience 321
L. H. GANN
19. Humanitarianism at Berlin: Myth or Reality? 333
S. MIERS
20. Africa as *terra nullius*: The Berlin Conference and
International Law 347
J. FISCH
21. The Berlin Conference in the German, French, and
British Press 377
E. BENDIKAT

D. AFRICAN REACTIONS TO IMPERIAL INVASION

22. 'Many Questions—Some Answers': African Resistance
in West Africa—A General View 401
M. CROWDER
23. Partition in Practice: African Politics and European
Rivalry in Bufumbira 415
E. HOPKINS

24. Indigenization of European Colonialism in Africa: Processes in Yorubaland and Dahomey since 1860	441
A. I. ASIWAJU	
25. Nigerian Reaction to the Imposition of British Colonial Rule, 1885-1918	453
OBARO IKIME	
26. Afro-European Relations in the Western Congo Basin c.1884-1885	469
MUMBANZA MWA BAWELE	
27. Crisis and Choice in the Nigerian Emirates: The Decisive Decade, 1897-1906	491
A. H. M. KIRK-GREENE	
28. African Perception of the New European Policies in Africa during the 1880s	507
F. ANSPRENGER	
E. THE BERLIN AFRICA CONFERENCE: A HUNDRED YEARS ON	
29. The Berlin Conference and the Expansion of Europe: A Conclusion	527
H. L. WESSELING	
30. The Results of the Berlin West Africa Conference: An Assessment	541
G. N. UZOIGWE	
Index of Persons	553
Index of Places	559
List of Contributors	567



LIST OF MAPS, FIGURES, AND TABLES

Maps

- I Central Africa, as the participants knew it.
After the map by F. Friederichsen, annexed to the 9th protocol of the
Berlin Conference
(frontispiece)
- II The European Advance into Central and East Africa
(xx)
- 5.1 Missionary Activities at the Lower Congo before 1885
(p. 87)
- 5.2 Lavigerie's Map of Africa
(p. 90)
- 10.1 The Climax of British Unofficial Empire: Africa on the Eve of European
Partition, c.1878
(p. 196)
- 27.1 Territories of the Royal Niger Company, 1897
(p. 495)

Figures

- 2.1 United Kingdom Direct Trade with Western Africa: 1875-1890
(p. 42)
- 2.2 Total Trade Values: British Possessions in West Africa: 1875-1890
(p. 43)
- 2.3 Hamburg Direct Imports from Western Africa: 1875-1890
(p. 45)
- 2.4 United Kingdom Direct Trade with Western Africa: 1875-1890, Palm Oil
and Palm Kernels
(p. 46)
- 2.5 United Kingdom Direct Trade with Western Africa: 1875-1890: Rubber
and Ivory
(p. 47)

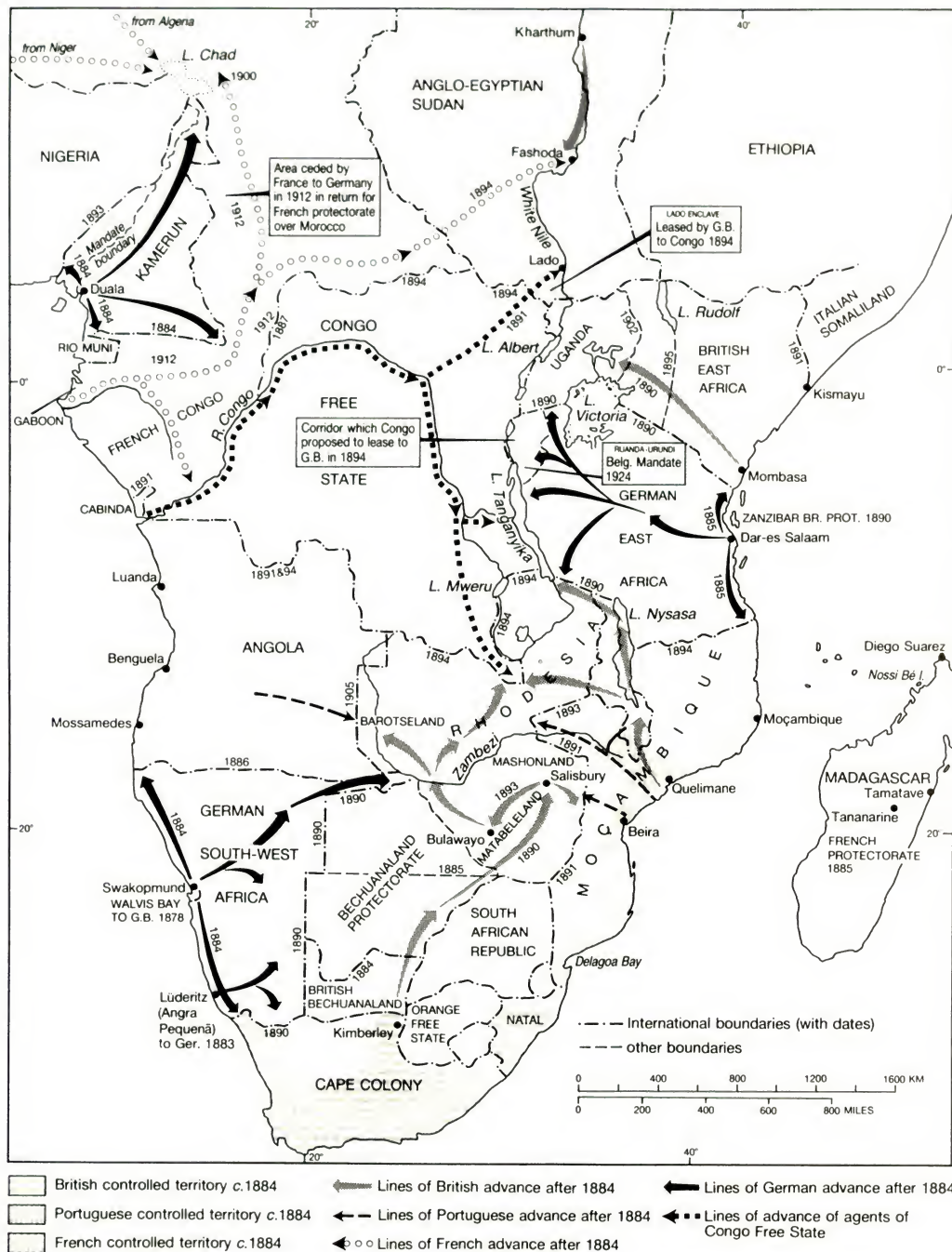
Tables

- 2.1 Total Trade of the United Kingdom with Western Africa: Quinquennial
Averages
(p. 41)

- 2.2 British Exports to Western Africa: Prices and Quantities Index (p. 48)
- 10.1 British Trade with West Africa, 1874-1884 (p. 192)

ABBREVIATIONS

ACSSp	Archives Générales des Pères du St. Esprit Paris
AEMD	Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Mémoires et Documents (France)
AEPA	Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Papiers d'Agents (France)
AGPB	Archivio Generale dei Padri Bianchi (Italy)
AIA	Association Internationale Africaine
AIC	Association Internationale du Congo
AMAE	Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères (Belgium)
AN	Archives Nationales (France)
ANC	African National Congress
ANSOM	Archives Nationales, Section Outre-Mer (France)
APR	Archives des Palais royaux (Belgium)
BFAS	British Foreign and Anti-Slavery Society
BMS	Baptist Missionary Society
BSAC	British South Africa Company
CFAE	Compagnie Française de l'Afrique Équatoriale
CMS	Church Missionary Society
<i>Ddf</i>	<i>Documents diplomatiques français</i>
DKG	Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft
DKGfSWA	Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft für Südwestafrika
DOAG	Deutsche-Ostafrikanische Gesellschaft
DZA	Deutsches Zentralarchiv
FOCP	Foreign Office Confidential Print
GfdK	Gesellschaft für deutsche Kolonisation
<i>JO</i>	<i>Journal officiel de la République française</i>
KV	Deutscher Kolonialverein
LIM	Livingstone Inland Mission
MAEF	Ministère des Affaires Étrangères Français
MKbG	Mansfeldische Kupferschiefer bauende Gesellschaft
MMC	Ministère de la Marine et des Colonies (France)
MREA	Ministère des Relations Extérieures Paris—Archives
NAC	National African Company
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OCPC	Office of the Committee of the Privy Council for Trade
PA	Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (Germany)
<i>PP</i>	<i>Parliamentary Papers</i>
PRO	Public Record Office
RKA	Reichskolonialamt
RNC	Royal Niger Company
WAFF	West Africa Frontier Force
WV	Westdeutscher Verein für Kolonisation und Export
ZStA	Zentrales Staatsarchiv



MAP II. The European Advance into Central and East Africa

Source: J. D. Fage and M. Verity, *An Atlas of African History*, 2nd edn., London 1978, map 49.

The Conference in Berlin and the Future in Africa, 1884-1885

RONALD ROBINSON

Just over a century ago in Berlin the powers of three continents made so bold as to plan the destiny of another. Interrupting their dynastic intrigues, skating parties, and court balls¹ on a Saturday in November 1884, the plenipotentiaries of Europe, the Porte, and the United States met in the Reich Chancellery, as if to decide the future in much of tropical Africa where few Europeans had set foot and unconsulted Africans still ruled. In the obscurity Prince Bismarck's Conference proceeded in two different directions. They decided ostensibly to internationalize the regions in question on principles that served the international economy well enough in other continents. Accordingly, the powers contracted by treaty to carry the 'Open Door' from China and Japan to the Congo basin (where emperors to keep it open were few and far between) and to export 'Free navigation' from the Danube to the Niger and Congo rivers (whose banks lacked Austrias to operate the system).² At the same time the interested powers settled their individual claims in the lobbies and divided the territories concerned among themselves. Hence while they decreed an international free trade regime in the treaty, in the bilateral settlements, they partitioned the area politically into exclusive spheres of influence which implied economic monopoly. The treaty looks back to the era of commerce without domination in Euro-African relations; the partition looks forward to the age of colonial empires. The ambivalence is intriguing. As an uncertain portent of imperialism, the proceedings have the fascination of an official charade in which none of the actors could foresee the meaning of the play in Africa, and every one mimed a different secret in Europe. For this reason, the question of the significance of the Conference is well worth studying afresh on the occasion of its centenary.

The problem is controversial. It is even in doubt whether West Africa was the main concern of the Conference. Far graver affairs in other parts of the continent and the world at large were also involved. As contemporary observers and historians alike have found, the negotiations are open to different meanings:³ they were about *Zollvereine* in Africa, they were about power politics in Europe; they were intended to avert a

¹ For diplomatic life in Berlin, see Sir Rennell Rodd, *Social and Diplomatic Memories 1884-1893*, London 1922. The Crown Princess's letters to her mother, Queen Victoria, give an English view of the German court (Roger Fulford, (ed.), *Dearest Mamma: Private Correspondence of Queen Victoria and the German Crown Princess, 1878-1885*, London 1981).

² *General Act of the Berlin Conference*, 26 Feb. 1885; *Protocols and General Act of the Berlin Conference*, C. 4361, 1885, Prince Bismarck's opening address, *ibid.*, 9.

³ For divergent views of the Conference, see S. E.

Crowe, *The Berlin West African Conference 1884-1885*, London 1942; E. Axelson, *Portugal and the Scramble for Africa 1875-1891*, Johannesburg 1967, ch. 4; W. Roger Louis, 'The Berlin Conference', in P. Gifford and W. R. Louis (eds.), *France and Britain in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule*, New Haven 1971; J. Hargreaves, *West Africa Partitioned*, 2 vols., London 1974-85, vol. 1, *The Loaded Pause 1885-1889*; R. E. Robinson and J. Gallagher, 'The Partition of Africa', *New Cambridge Modern History*, vol. 9, Cambridge 1962.

partition, they deliberately carved up Africa; they were designed to bring African peoples freely into the 'commercial republic of the world', they aimed at colonial expropriation; the philanthropy was well meant, it was humbug; the treaty signified little in Africa, the Conference changed the course of events drastically. A solution to this riddle of alternative half-truths is required if the Conference is to make sense and its role in the partition of Africa is to be understood.

This volume brings together the latest research in hopes of resolving the conflicts in interpretation. It seemed at first that tricks of hindsight involved in construing the Conference as an episode in the scramble for Africa had given rise to the different views. The editors hoped that basic disagreements might disappear, if contributors considered the assembly as an event in its own right. For better or worse, their plan proved too optimistic; an event in one continent is almost bound to mean something else again in the history of another, and so European and African historians still disagree fundamentally in places.⁴ Although there are strands of consensus in these papers, they are by no means consistent. Rather than undertake the invidious task of ruling on the opinions of their colleagues, the editors invite the reader to form his own judgement from the wealth of evidence provided, with this introductory essay as a guide to the main issues in debate. Apart from filling in a few gaps left in the coverage, the writer offers a purely personal analysis of what the ambiguities in Berlin signified.

Interpretations have turned one way or the other on four crucial issues: first, on different definitions of the scope of the Conference. If, for instance, the title is restricted legalistically to the multilateral proceedings in formal assembly, the Conference arguably did not partition Africa. But if the term is taken to include the associated bilateral negotiations, the Conference clearly did partition Africa. A working definition obviously requires an understanding of how the multilateral and bilateral negotiations related to each other. Second, the term 'partition' has been used in several different senses and has to be clarified as to its 'proto-colonial' or 'anticolonial' implications. The role of the Conference in bringing about the partition of Africa as a whole depends upon it. For purposes of this essay, partitions are defined as 'proto-colonial' where areas are staked out for future colonial occupation, and 'anti-colonial' where the object is merely to prevent annexation by other powers or to keep a region open for free trade. Third, and most difficult, what, if anything, did the Conference signify in the history of Africa? Last, the issue of the controversial Egyptian factor in the Berlin negotiations: the question of whether the West African partition took place independently, or as a consequence of the British landing on the Nile.⁵

The meaning of the Conference, like that of a charade, is clear in the devising, but hidden in the proceedings. It is necessary therefore to explore its origins, and one meaning at least is certain: the Concert of Europe was summoned to deal with affairs of relatively minor importance. 'Miniature scrambles'⁶ on the West African coasts had been settled normally through 'hands-off' arrangements, initiated locally.⁷ Now for the first time, it seemed 'Europe as an informal federation . . . [was disposing] of States and

⁴ For differing interpretations of the Conference, see below, pp. 66-8, 214, 263-4, 313-14, 330-1, 333, 347-8, 395-9, 451, 466-7, 531, 545, 551.

⁵ On the Egyptian factor, see R. Robinson and J. Gallagher with A. Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism*, 2nd edn. London 1981; for

critical views, see R. L. Louis, *Imperialism, the Robinson and Gallagher Controversy*, New York 1976.

⁶ Prof. Asiwaju's term, see below, p. 447.

⁷ See below Prof. Sanderson's paper for an account of the earlier coast regime, and Dr Newbury's paper on West African trade.

territories [in Africa] not in the occupation of its component peoples.⁸ A more urgent competition among European consuls and explorers for exclusive treaties with African rulers along the unclaimed coasts and up rivers had developed during the past eighteen months and the unexpected advent in 1884 of German consuls on gunboats sharpened the rivalry. Coastal protectorates, threatening to close so many doorways into the Central African interior,⁹ 'were being announced with such bewildering rapidity that no map-maker could keep pace'.¹⁰ Merchants were pressing their governments for security against foreign consular activity, while governments, suspecting their rivals of embarking on colonial annexations with little justification, began 'protecting' actual and prospective markets for their traders. Although local economic competition and difficulties with African states tended to politicise the trade in places, it was the entanglement in the central workings of European diplomacy that brought West African commerce onto the conference table.

While discussing terms for a Franco-German *entente* on overseas questions between April and October 1884, Bismarck and Jules Ferry, the French President of Council and Foreign Minister, gradually defined the purpose and agenda of the Conference. In the preparation the project served many purposes, nor was it restricted to West Africa: the plan was deeply involved in the Anglo-French quarrel over Egypt and Anglo-German disputes over jurisdiction from Cameroon and Angra Pequena to Fiji and New Guinea. All of these conflicts raised the question of international free trade and navigation in one form or another, and in every case, one nation feared exclusion by another. Hence the Berlin Conference has to be studied as one of a series of such negotiations. It makes little sense in isolation.

At the outset of the talks the German Chancellor proposed that a congress should guarantee free trade 'in all unoccupied parts of the world not yet legally occupied by a recognized Power'.¹¹ To give the project the necessary authority, France was invited to join Germany and her allies in a maritime league against English pretensions to 'informal empire' and breakdown the chief obstacle to German commercial overseas expansion. The naval power of a protectionist France was to be conscripted into the service of universal Cobdenism! Their immediate target was the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty of February 1884, itself an international insurance for free trade that ironically Granville, the British Foreign Minister, had taken out against Portuguese protectionism and the exclusive treaties of Brazza and King Leopold's International African Association on the Congo.¹² Rejected in Paris and Berlin,¹³ intrigued against in Brussels, decried by merchants in Manchester¹⁴ and patriots in Lisbon, the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty had been sabotaged by mid-June. The African Conference hung fire for the time being, but the talks between Bismarck and Ferry continued about another and more important gathering.

⁸ *The Economist*, 15 Nov. 1884, p. 1183.

⁹ George Baden-Powell, 'The Expansion of Germany', *The Nineteenth Century*, Dec. 1884, no. 16, p. 871.

¹⁰ Editorial, 'The Scramble for Africa', *The Times*, 15 Sept. 1884.

¹¹ Courcel to Ferry, 14 May 1884, *Documents diplomatiques français (1871-1914)* (henceforth referred to as *Ddf*), 1st series; (1871-1900), vol. 5 (23 Feb. 1883-9 Apr. 1885), Paris 1933, no. 270, 289. Courcel to Ferry,

25 April 1884, *ibid.*, no. 249, 268.

¹² Axelson, *Portugal and the Scramble*, chs. 2-3.

¹³ Courcel to Ferry, 25 Apr. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 249, 268; Laboulaye to Ferry, 11 May 1884, *ibid.*, no. 265, 283; Courcel to Ferry, 22 May 1884, *ibid.*, no. 275, 296.

¹⁴ R. Anstey, *Britain and the Congo in the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford 1962, pp. vi-vii; Granville to Aberdare, 20 Feb. 1884 (Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, *The Life of Lord Granville*, vol. 2, London 1905, p. 356).

Granville had called an Egyptian Conference to meet in London on 28 June, hoping that the powers would agree to revise the international debt liquidation law governing the Khedive's revenues, and so help solve the financial difficulties of the British occupation.¹⁵ In French eyes, Egypt was the country most in need of international guarantees of equal rights and free navigation against English exclusiveness.¹⁶ As Ferry told Bismarck candidly, the main point of their talks from the standpoint of an isolated France, was to obtain German and allied support at the London Conference, to 'prevent a permanent British protectorate over Egypt'.¹⁷ A British stranglehold on the Suez Canal and the Red Sea ports was incompatible with French expansion in Indo-China and Madagascar.¹⁸ Berlin had suggested a league for free trade in Africa and the Pacific; Paris replied with a request for German aid in defending the international regime in Cairo. This was to remain the French *quid pro quo* for an African Conference henceforth. The Chancellor however had good German reasons to refuse any such undertaking for the time being.

Ferry attributed the refusal to the flexibility of Bismarck's 'Egyptian baton'. So long as London and Paris disagreed over the Nile, and Germany's allies, Austria and Italy, held the balance between the two antagonists on the International Debt Commission which in turn controlled a large part of the Anglo-Egyptian government's revenues, Bismarck's support was critical. It was for this reason that Paris regarded Germany as 'the only Power able to check British designs on Egypt', but the French also realized that Bismarck was using his potential weight in Cairo as a threat to extract overseas gains from London. Courcel, the French ambassador in Berlin, warned, 'If England, which is in conflict with German interests in many parts of the world . . . [should make] concessions [overseas], her cause would be won in Egypt.'¹⁹ As Granville and Ferry understood it, the German game was to sell their favours in Egypt to the highest bidder, whether Britain or France, to keep them divided and so to draw whichever proved most compliant into the Bismarckian alliance system.²⁰ The Chancellor's own account of his approach to the negotiation for a Franco-German African conference confirms the French analysis: 'We were prepared [in May 1884] . . . [to] make a *bargain* with Britain about Egypt on the one hand, and the Colonies on the other, but if British response were unsatisfactory, we would make this bargain with France.'²¹

As early as April 1884 Bismarck had told the British ambassador Ampthill privately:

Germany's financial interest in the 'Caisse' did not exceed a miserable million of Marks, and German Shipping in the Canal was below the Mark, so that conflicting commercial interests, between England and Germany were happily not to be apprehended in Egypt, as for instance on the Congo, the West Coast or Fiji where German claims stood sorely in need of equitable consideration by H.M. Govt. . . .

Prince Bismarck then said that speaking quite privately as a friend, he wished to remind me that he had been found fault with in England and by English statesmen for advising Lord Beaconsfield to '*take Egypt*' but he saw as yet no reason to alter his opinion. He still thought that

¹⁵ Ferry to Decrais, 17 Apr. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 239, 256.

¹⁶ Courcel to Ferry, 25 Apr. 1884, *ibid.*, no. 246, 267.

¹⁷ Ferry to Decrais, 17 Apr. 1884, *ibid.*, no. 239, 257.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 256-8.

¹⁹ Courcel to Ferry, 13 May 1884, *ibid.*, no. 269, 288.

²⁰ Courcel to Ferry, 25 Apr. 1884, *ibid.*, no. 247, 266.

²¹ Bismarck to Münster, 24 Jan. 1884, *Die grosse Politik der europäischen Kabinette 1871-1914: Sammlung der diplomatischen Akten des auswärtigen Amtes*, ed. J. Lepsius, A. Mendelsohn-Bartholdy, and F. Thimme, 40 vols., Berlin 1922-7, vol. 4, no. 757, 93-5 (R. J. Gavin and J. A. Betley, eds., *The Scramble for Africa: Documents on the Berlin West African Conference and Related Subjects 1884/1885*, Ibadan 1973).

if England had undertaken the protectorate of Egypt *then* Egypt would *now* be enjoying the good Government, peace order and commercial confidence, which England knows so well how to bestow on all her vast Oriental possessions, and he still persisted in thinking the blessings of a permanent protectorate preferable to a transitory state of things, pending an uncertain issue, and likely to hatch unforeseen complications.²²

London was slow to grasp this point, but Ferry was quicker. Finding no help in Berlin over the Egyptian question on the eve of the London conference, he settled with Granville provisionally for British evacuation by 1888 in return for French help in reforming the debt law.²³ Their *rapprochement* however proved a fiasco. At the London meetings throughout July France led the powers in contesting the British account of the Egyptian budget deficit, and deferring to French parliamentary criticism, refused to cut the interest due to the bondholders. Granville, angrily dismissing a motion for a date to reconvene the powers, broke up the Conference on the second of August.²⁴ Curiously the British and French foreign ministers disagreed on everything, except in blaming Bismarck²⁵ and, whether justly or not, the failure of their Egyptian reconciliation returned the baton to his hand. The Chancellor was in no doubt that the chances of calling his African Conference depended on the breakdown of the London Conference. He was also sure that 'the points discussed in that [London Conference] meeting were of greater political importance than those relating to West Africa'.²⁶

'Now that the Conference of London has failed,' Bismarck instructed Hatzfeldt, the moment seems favourable . . . to open confidential negotiations in Paris . . . If France shows willingness, we might propose to her a draft common agreement under which participants in the Treaty shall be granted freedom to trade with those [West African] coastal areas still under no European jurisdiction . . . on the analogy of Eastern Asia: we shall together be in a position to invite the adherence of England, Holland, Spain, Portugal and Belgium. . . . It would be most desirable if England's agreement could be obtained, but I scarcely think it probable. I believe, rather, that the British struggles to obtain an exclusive monopoly . . . in non-European waters will force the other commercial nations to join together to provide a make-weight for the Colonial supremacy of England.²⁷

It was "time to strike while the iron is hot" . . . for an entente between France and Germany on the affairs of West Africa and Egypt'.²⁸ The talks resumed on this double basis. At the end of August the Chancellor offered to help France reconvene the Egyptian Conference with or without English consent, and call another to guarantee free navigation through the Suez Canal.²⁹ Paris preferred to wait and see what

²² Ampthill to Granville, 10 Apr. 1884 (Paul Knaplund, ed., *Letters from the Berlin Embassy, Selections from the Private Correspondence of British Representatives in Berlin and Foreign Secretary Lord Granville, 1880-1885*, vol. 2, American Historical Association, Washington 1944, pp. 322-3).

²³ Waddington to Ferry, 30 May 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 286, 306; and 7 June 1884, no. 294, 312; Ferry to Waddington, 31 May 1884, *ibid.*, no. 289, 308.

²⁴ Waddington to Ferry, 15 July 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 339, 349-50; Ferry to Waddington, 17 July 1884, no. 340, 350-1; Ferry to Waddington, 27 July 1884, no. 345, 354; Courcel to Ferry, 29 July 1884, no. 347, 355-6; Waddington to Ferry, 2 Aug. 1884, no. 350, 357.

²⁵ Courcel to Ferry, 28 July 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 346, 355; and 9 Aug. 1884, no. 357, 361. Granville to Gladstone, 27 July 1884 (Agatha Ramm (ed.), *Political Correspondence of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville, 1876-1886*, vol. 2, Oxford 1962, p. 219).

²⁶ Münster to Granville, 2 Nov. 1884, *Correspondence respecting the West African Conference*, C. 4205, no. 30.

²⁷ Bismarck to Hatzfeldt, 7 Aug. 1884, *Grosse Politik*, vol. 3, 414 (Gavin and Betley, *Scramble*, p. 392).

²⁸ Courcel to Ferry, 14 Aug. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 365, 367.

²⁹ Hatzfeldt to Bismarck, 11 Aug. 1884, and Bismarck Note, *Grosse Politik*, vol. 3, no. 414, (E.T.S. Dugdale, *German Diplomatic Documents, 1871-1894*: vol. 1. Bismarck's

England would do next. On 13 September the Anglo-Egyptian government stopped tribute payment to the Porte and took money due to the debt commission to meet the administrative deficit in defiance of the international control.³⁰ Northbrook's mission to Cairo heralded a British guaranteed loan which threatened to consolidate the temporary English occupation by giving it financial independence. Twelve days later³¹ Germany and her allies protested against this flagrant breach of international treaties, demanded German and Russian seats on the Debt Commission and joined France in suing the Anglo-Egyptian government in the 'mixed courts' in Cairo. Bismarck even talked of a Franco-German naval demonstration with the Italians at Alexandria.³² The French requirement of strong support against an exclusive British protectorate on the Nile had been met. On 7 October Courcel told Herbert Bismarck of French satisfaction with 'our mutual compact to agree together beforehand on all *démarches*, where Egypt is concerned'. As soon as the Egyptian end of the Franco-German bargain came into operation, the West African end, which had been negotiated in parallel over the past two months, finally came into effect. On the next day France and Germany jointly invited the powers to the Berlin Africa Conference.³³

The ambivalence of the Conference to come was implicit in the agenda defined in August and September. Bismarck had proposed that France and Germany should exchange free trade rights in all their future protectorates along the West and South West African coasts, and refuse to recognize those of other powers unless they gave similar free trade undertakings. They were to subscribe to these principles collectively at the Conference. Free trade for this purpose Berlin defined peculiarly as a ban on all custom duties. The proposal aimed particularly at keeping the Congo open to all comers and outlawing the English 'Monroe doctrine' over the South African coasts, which was cramping Germany's new lodgement at Angra Pequena and blocking its access to the Transvaal republic.³⁴

Ferry discovered three paradoxes in the projected Conference while reflecting on the difficulties of translating Bismarck's *Realpolitik* into African reality. The first was that of co-opting protectionist powers such as France and Portugal into an African free trade crusade. The French identified the Conference at once as a device for 'securing equal opportunities for German traders in the unexplored regions of central Africa, as much against France as against England, Portugal and [King Leopold's] African Association'. Under this proposal, Paris protested, Germany gives nothing, except access to her fresh claims at Cameroon and Angra Pequena which are not markets,

Relations with England, 1871-1890, London 1928, 132-3); Courcel to Ferry, 25-6 Aug. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 377, 381-3; 30 Aug. 1884, no. 385, 390-5; Ferry to Courcel, 8 Sept. 1884, no. 391, 401-2.

³⁰ Ferry to Courcel, 21 Sept. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 403, 416-17.

³¹ Courcel to Ferry, 25 Sept. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 408, and 28 Sept. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 410, 427-9; Courcel to Ferry, 12 Nov. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 450, 470. See *Africa and the Victorians*, 146; for a discussion of the Egyptian question, see ch. 5.

³² Memoranda by Hatzfeldt, 22 and 24 Sept. 1884; Bismarck to Herbert Bismarck, 5 and 6 Oct. 1884; Herbert Bismarck to Bismarck, 6 Oct. 1884, *Grosse*

Politik, vol. 3, nos. 428-31 (Dugdale, *Documents*, 137-42) Courcel to Ferry, 28 Sept. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 410, 427-9.

³³ Herbert Bismarck to Bismarck, 7 Oct. 1884, *Grosse Politik*, vol. 3, no. 438 (Dugdale, 142); Courcel to Ferry, 23 Sept. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 407, 423-5; 25 Sept. 1884, no. 408, 425-6; 28 Sept. 1884, no. 410, 427-9; Note by Courcel, 30 Sept. 1884, *ibid.*, no. 412, 432-4; Note by Ferry, 6 Oct. 1884, *ibid.*, no. 421, 441-43; Ferry Circular, 5 Oct. 1884, *ibid.*, no. 419, 438; Hatzfeldt Memo, 24 Sept. 1884, *Grosse Politik*, vol. 3, no. 440; Herbert Bismarck to Bismarck, 6 Oct. 1884, *ibid.*, no. 431 (Dugdale, 138-40).

³⁴ Courcel to Ferry, 17 Aug. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 373, 374.

while we let the Germans into vast hinterlands opened by our explorers at great expense to our budget. A *parvenu* in Africa, Germany would reap in the hinterlands what the longstanding colonial powers had sown on the coasts.³⁵ Paris refused to give up protective tariffs reserving the hinterlands of her coastal footholds for French enterprise.³⁶ Bismarck was forced to withdraw Angra Pequena from his offer to France, because he believed the protectorate there was Lüderitz's private property and the proprietor had insisted on levying-tariffs!³⁷ Ferry however, calculating that exclusive French control of the Ogowe route into the Congo basin would be of little value compared with free access to the main river, saw one virtue in the German proposal. If the Conference imposed free trade on Leopold's private Association for developing the Congo, and the powers recognized the French lien on its assets, France could also reap where she had not sown.³⁸ Leopold's projected railway might eventually connect the upper and lower rivers. The discussion so far suggested that liberalizing African trade was a matter for reciprocal concessions between individual states, rather than legislation by the European Concert. Free trade at Berlin would have to be constructed out of exchanges of local national advantages.

Ferry found a second paradox in Bismarck's agenda for the Conference in the proposed ban on customs duties of any kind. It was clearly impracticable to impose free trade on African states without tariff revenue or differential trading profits to meet the expense. In their enthusiasm for extending the traditionally open trading system from the coasts to the hinterlands, Ferry implied, the Germans seemed to have forgotten the actual rulers of these countries. There were all kinds of more or less equal commercial alliances with them which tended to modulate in time into European control. A Conference such as Bismarck proposed would rule out the possibility of future colonies, at the same time as the extension of free trade would require European intervention. No government or company could afford philanthropically to give free access to all nations, without reward or revenue. Berlin was urged to think again and allow taxes for administrative expenses useful to trade, but exceptions, Bismarck insisted, would open too many loopholes. A Conference at which the powers were to be asked to do the impossible did not appeal to French logic.³⁹

The last and fundamental paradox, Ferry implied, lay in the idea of a Conference to establish equal commercial access by means of exclusive spheres of political influence. Under prevailing conditions of European rivalry in African politics, he noted, trade could hardly be regulated without specifying individual territorial responsibilities for carrying out the regulations.⁴⁰ Both sponsors of the assembly agreed therefore that the free trade principle required a partition of the interior. By September in the library at Varzin, they had outlined the areas which each would claim or concede, not only in the Congo basin but in the other hinterlands of the west and south west coasts 'reaching into the unexplored heart of the great continent'.⁴¹ They realized beforehand that a Conference bringing all kinds of territorial squabbles to a head would precipitate rather than avert a general partition. In September Ferry emphasized the necessity of

³⁵ Ferry, Note on the German Proposition, 22 Aug. 1884, *ibid.*, no. 376, 377-80.

³⁶ Ferry to Courcel, 19 Sept. 1884, *ibid.*, no. 402, 415.

³⁷ Courcel to Ferry, 21 Sept. 1884, *ibid.*, no. 404, 418.

³⁸ Ferry, Note, 22 Aug. 1884, *ibid.*, no. 376, 377-80.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Courcel to Ferry, 30 Aug. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 385, 392.

'indicating precisely to what territories the rules adopted by the two powers were to be applied'.⁴²

The ambivalences in the agenda were as plain to the British as they had been to the French, though Granville knew nothing of the planning.⁴³ As Downing Street saw it, 'it seems almost necessary that the whole course of the Congo should be annexed by European Powers, before the principle of free trade could be established, otherwise legislation for so vast a territory, no part of which really belongs to any of the legislators, cannot have much practical effect.'⁴⁴ Although Ferry tried to confine the agenda to a 'more modest' and 'a more practical' scope, the paradoxes in Bismarck's original conception remained.⁴⁵

Whether the project was practicable under African conditions or not, the convenors were more concerned with their other objectives. Ferry, intent on the Egyptian basis of the *entente*, refrained from pressing his criticisms to a logical conclusion; Bismarck, hastening to mount the Conference, accepted most of his amendments without demur. Both men were more interested in the assembly for Egyptian and European reasons than in what precisely might be accomplished in Africa. It was common knowledge that the Chancellor was pitching a 'noisy anti-British campaign' to catch the votes of the German 'middle classes',⁴⁶ that his West African issues had been chosen for their anglophobic appeal.⁴⁷ At war with China, as well as Indo-China, the French refused to be drawn into an imbroglio with England for the sake of improving the Chancellor's electoral prospects and preferred to rely on Britain's free trade loyalties to bring her to the Conference table.⁴⁸

Bismarck did his utmost to time the Conference so as to coincide with the parliamentary elections in October and was determined to hold it in Berlin, although out of diplomatic finesse a meeting in Paris was offered.⁴⁹ Ferry, shuddering at the idea of welcoming the victor of Sedan to Paris, readily agreed that Berlin would give the Conference an 'authority' which the 'isolated' French capital could not provide.⁵⁰ The 'authority' derived from the League of Emperors and the Triple Alliance at the Chancellor's back, while the Egyptian threat would persuade the British to attend, if necessary. The British had to come to Berlin to acknowledge before the German people the advent of German world power in the face of the greatest of maritime empires. The Chancellor's allies had to come to Berlin to show the English that Germany's preponderance in Europe counted overseas. Thus, Bismarck's Conference was planned as a ritual drama signifying a change in seniority between sibling nations.

⁴² Ferry to Courcel, 19 Sept. 1884, *ibid.*, no. 402, 415; The Conference was to be called to endorse the three principles 'and by way of consequence, to regulate the territorial questions interesting both Portugal and the Belgian African Society' (Courcel to Ferry, 30 Aug. 1884, *ibid.*, no. 385, 392); 'liberty of commerce in all the extent of the future state of the Congo' (Bismarck to Ferry, 13 Sept. 1884, *ibid.*, no. 395, 405); Ferry, Note, 22 Aug. 1884, *ibid.*, no. 376, 379; Courcel to Ferry, 25-6 Aug. 1884, *ibid.*, no. 377, 381-2.

⁴³ Granville to Gladstone, 12 Oct. 1884 (Ramm, *Correspondence*, vol. 2, 278).

⁴⁴ T. V. Lister, 'Minute on the West African Conference', 14 Oct. 1884, FO 403/46, no. 26 (Gavin and Betley, *Scramble*, p. 46).

⁴⁵ Ferry, Note, 22 Aug. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 376, 380.

⁴⁶ Courcel to Ferry, 14 Apr. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 236, 253-5; Ampthill to Granville, 2 Aug. 1884, (Knaplund, *Letters from the Berlin Embassy*, pp. 338-9).

⁴⁷ Courcel to Ferry, 30 Aug. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 383, 389; Courcel to Ferry, 14 Sept. 1884, enclosing letter from Bismarck of 13 Sept., *ibid.*, no. 395, 404-5.

⁴⁸ Ferry, Note, 22 Aug. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 376, 380.

⁴⁹ Courcel to Ferry, 30 Aug. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 385, 393; 6 Sept. 1884, no. 390, 401; 22 Sept. 1884, no. 406, 423.

⁵⁰ Courcel to Ferry, 30 Aug. 1884, *ibid.*, no. 385, 393.

During the Conference he was to celebrate in the Reichstag 'the astonishment' of the British rulers of the waves at 'their cousins, the land rats [taking] suddenly to seafaring', and warned 'Britannia' that her hegemony overseas was at an end.⁵¹ Whatever African objects the Berlin Conference might serve, it could not fail as a Wagnerian *coup de théâtre*. There was therefore every German and Egyptian reason for making a success of the African business.

In the same vein Kaiser Wilhelm I wrote to a brother monarch in October: 'Germany is at present in a position to be considered a Colonial Power, and qualified, as such, to propose the meeting of a Conference at Berlin. Our country is about to be heard at this important Congress for the purpose of laying down the basis of the future regime of these vast regions.'⁵² Thus the virile German empire was to emulate the British empire by humiliating it. As for the weary titans of the world wrestling in London with electoral reform, a naval scare, and a sea of troubles with the Irish, Egyptians, Mahdists, Boers, Afghans, and Russians at the same time, the German challenge in West Africa seemed comparatively mild. On receiving the invitation, the British understood that once again a continental league had been raised against 'the Colossus' which since the Napoleonic Wars had dominated the outer world.⁵³ Although the Conference agenda questioned their position on the lower Niger,⁵⁴ the Foreign Office worried most over the broader implications of defining the meaning of 'effective occupation on coasts'. Thirty years earlier, when the French had asked how much of the Australian continent the British claimed, the Prime Minister, Lord Russell had blandly replied, 'the whole'. Now the Foreign Office took to heart a Portuguese report that 'on pretence of settling a point of international jurisprudence which Prince Bismarck claims to establish on the west coast of Africa, and may extend to Asia and Oceania', 'England will find herself obliged effectively to occupy by force of arms numerous territories of which she is the nominal possessor'. 'The struggle for the partition of the world is thus entering upon a threatening phase, and every power which is entitled to take part in the conference should make use of the opportunity.'⁵⁵

Bismarck's summons sent Granville and his officials scurrying to consult legal experts and compile the precedents and places likely to be affected. Selbourne, the Lord Chancellor, went to the Cabinet over the possible implications in Egypt, suspecting a Franco-German intrigue to gain an advantage over its unoccupied Red Sea littoral,⁵⁶ while the Africa hands in the Foreign and Colonial Offices believed Bismarck was aiming the 'effective occupation' principle chiefly at shaky British claims around Angra Pequena.⁵⁷ They were also disturbed over possible effects in East Africa where Franco-German intrigues at Zanzibar were expected, and they prepared to

⁵¹ Bismarck's Speech to the Reichstag, 10 Jan. 1885, enclosed in Malet to Granville, 11 Jan. 1885, 'Correspondence respecting Affairs in the Cameroons', C. 4279, no. 83 (1885). 'The Conference is intended by that wily Prince Bismarck to serve as the outward and visible sign of the isolation of England' (*The Saturday Review*, 22 Nov. 1884, 646).

⁵² Kaiser Wilhelm to King of Portugal, 19 Oct. 1884, FO 84/1813, 302-3.

⁵³ 'Contra Inglattera', *The Liberal*, 14 Oct. 1884, in FO 84/1813/152, 3.

⁵⁴ Aberdare to Granville, 16 Oct. 1884, FO 84/1813, 197-9.

⁵⁵ 'Contra Inglattera', *The Liberal*, 14 Oct. 1884.

⁵⁶ Selbourne to Pauncefoot, 18 Jan. 1885; Minutes on Malet to Granville, 18 Jan. 1885, 'Conference 3rd Basis', FO 84/1820, 38-41.

⁵⁷ E. Hertslet, 'Memorandum on the Formalities necessary for the Effective Annexation of Territory', 18 Oct. 1884, FO 84/1813, 246-66; Anderson Memo, 27 Oct. 1884, FO 84/1814, 67-9; *The Times*, Leader, 14 Oct. 1884.

defend on the Red Sea and Zanzibar mainland the African coasts of strategic importance to the vital connection with the empire in India.⁵⁸

Meanwhile, Downing Street had debated whether to instruct Bismarck in another contradiction implied in his agenda. He was clearly backing the International Association's claims to the Congo, believing that it would promote free trade and 'civilization'. In this the Foreign Office was certain that he was mistaken. Whether King Leopold was 'a marvellously simple [and good] man' or 'a marvellously deep man', all their reports on the activities of his enterprise since 1879 suggested a scheme for 'a gigantic commercial monopoly'. As early as May 1884, T. V. Lister of the Foreign Office protested: 'When the inevitable Congo Conference takes place, a great push will be made by the King's touts, by the U.S. Govt., who have committed a great act of folly, and by the French Govt., who have the reversion . . . to have the Association represented as an independent Power. 'In view of the shabby and mischievous trick which the King has played [against the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty], we should lose no opportunity of showing up the gigantic fraud, of which His Majesty has been the chief promoter and victim.' 'So far from [the Association's] roads and stations being open to all, they are jealously closed against all.' The Association moreover was acquiring land from the 'natives' to sell off to Europeans.⁵⁹ Finally the British wisely decided it would be futile to try and persuade Bismarck that the king of the Belgians had in fact 'bamboozled' him.⁶⁰ In spite of all, Granville under the German threat to Egypt concluded in October that 'the conference is too good a thing for us to impede, but we must not be trodden down in the matter'.⁶¹

If the meeting in Berlin was at the centre of Bismarck's overseas interests, it remained a sideshow of the Egyptian question for the French and the British. The survival of Ferry's ministry depended on the victories of the French forces fighting in China and Indo-China; Gladstone's parliamentary majority hung on the fighting to save Gordon in the Sudan and on pleasing advocates of evacuating and staying in Egypt at the same time. With so much business of vital importance to party politics, it is not surprising the Westminster parliament never found time to debate the work of the Conference.

Meeting at last on 15 November 1884, the Conference worked to an agenda which had been planned in two parts: the one formal and multilateral concerning general principles, the other dealing bilaterally with the consequential territorial settlements. Not only were the two linked together, they were indispensable to each other. The fundamental idea of this programme as a whole, Bismarck explained to the delegates, was that the trade of all nations should be equally free of all transit dues throughout the African littoral, and thus to provide the access of all nations to the interior.⁶²

The multilateral agenda consisted of three principles which were to be the subject of collective legislation in specific areas: first, freedom of commerce in the Congo basin and its mouths, where the governments concerned were to give open entry to all

⁵⁸ Anderson Memo, 27 Oct. 1884, FO 84/1814, 67-9; Anderson Minute, 21 Oct. 1884; C. Hill Memo, 20 Oct. 1884, FO 84/1813, 308-19.

⁵⁹ These opinions are taken from the Anderson Memo, 'Nature of the King of the Belgians', 2 Mar. 1884, FO 84/1809, 233-5, and Lister, Minute, 20 May 1884, PRO 30/29/198.

⁶⁰ Minutes, 'Question of Representations to Germany', 4-28 July 1884, FO 84/1812, 85-93.

⁶¹ Granville Minute on No. 37 to Malet, 17 Oct. 1884, FO 84/1813, 228-9.

⁶² Bismarck's opening speech to the Berlin Conference, 15 Nov. 1884, *Protocols*, 9.

comers, protect them equally, grant no monopolies or other differential trade privileges, and levy no administrative taxes.⁶³ Ferry had deflated the original German free trade theory as far as the formal agenda was concerned from 'all unoccupied parts of the world' to the Congo basin, where it would be to French advantage and agreeable to the other trading powers. The second principle was 'freedom of navigation [on the Congo and Niger Rivers] for all flags, and an exemption from all taxes but those levied as compensation for works which are called for by the requirements of navigation itself'.⁶⁴ The British had no objection on the Niger River, and since Goldie's price war had destroyed French enterprise on the lower river, Ferry admitted privately in September that they were in a position to guarantee free passage unilaterally.⁶⁵ He was also opposed to an international commission on the Congo River, where the responsibility of a free trade navigation was to be left to the riparian powers individually, France among them.⁶⁶ Lastly, the principle of 'effective occupation' was suggested tentatively: 'to forestall . . . disputes . . . it might be useful to come to an agreement as to the formalities to be observed in order that new occupations on the African coasts should be considered effective'.⁶⁷ Confined to the coasts, little of which remained unoccupied, the principle proved eventually 'as empty as Pandora's box'.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, in view of the 'fatal' risk of 'natives' taking sides in European wars in Africa, Bismarck hoped that the work of the Conference would 'withdraw vast regions from general European politics and restrict national rivalry to peaceful economic competition. For this purpose it was proposed to neutralize the regions in question on Belgian lines. A treaty of this kind could help liberate the populations from slave trading, and carry 'moral and material improvement' across the continent.⁶⁹ The rhetoric was Bismarck's but the ancestral voices were those of Wilberforce and Palmerston.

As a necessary consequence of the principles, Berlin and Paris had agreed that the bilateral agenda must include certain territorial settlements. In particular the rival claims of France, Portugal, and the International Association abutting the Congo River and the coasts about its mouths had to be agreed before the full Conference could define their individual responsibilities for free trade and navigation.⁷⁰ It was on this understanding that territorial questions had been ruled out of the collective programme. Neither France nor any other power would submit its claims to be arbitrated by the European Concert, and they had therefore been reserved for bilateral negotiations which allowed the individual bargaining of reciprocal compensations. A partition of the Congo was the vital link between the two parts of the Conference.

The bilateral programme not only called for a definition of the International Association's boundaries but also for recognition of its existence as an international

⁶³ Ibid., 9-10.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 10.

⁶⁵ Courcel, Note, 30 Sept. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 412, 433.

⁶⁶ Ibid.; Ferry to Courcel, 17 Nov. 1884, *ibid.*, 476, n. 2. to no. 456.

⁶⁷ *Protocols*, 10. For British reaction to this principle in light of their informal paramountcies in many parts of the world, see FO 84/1820 *passim*. In January 1885 the

Conference agreed at British insistence to omit mention of the word 'protectorate' from the treaty provisions concerning conditions for establishing effectual occupation (Malet to Granville, 28 Jan. 1885, FO 84/1820).

⁶⁸ Crowe, *Conference*, 4.
⁶⁹ Bismarck's closing speech to Conference, *Protocols*, 300-1.

⁷⁰ Courcel to Ferry, 30 Aug. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 385, 392.

entity. In April 1884 the United States on free trade conditions had recognized the association's flag as that of a 'friendly government' over the African states which had placed themselves under its supervision for their own benefit. The association's Agreement with France in May gave Paris a pre-emptive right over the assets and in the British view changed the character of the association's claims. As *The Times* reported on 20 May 1884, 'The bargain is . . . hollow on both sides, the contracting parties mutually agreeing to exchange things which belong to neither of them. The Association could not pose before the world as an informal philanthropic agent of Europe at large, and at the same time, bargain its claims on the Congo away to France in fee simple as an independent government.' The French and Germans differed over what form recognition should take. Ferry wanted to do no more than recognize the company as a '*puissance de fait*', restricted to its existing trading stations and treaty areas, where it might be capable of offering Europe free trade 'for nothing'.⁷¹ If it proved incapable, so much the better from the French point of view. Without import duties, its administrative costs would probably soon bankrupt King Leopold's private purse, and bring about a sale of his company to France. To frustrate this eventuality, Bismarck insinuated into the bilateral work of the Conference a project based on the German recognition treaty of 8 November, which inflated the association's claims out of all proportion to its presence, and created a hypothetical territorial power endowed with a vast quadrilateral of credit-worthy real estate. In this way he did his best to ensure its financial independence of France⁷² and bind its successors to free trade.

The British at first had presumed that the association would be chartered as a kind of international free trade company which, in view of their East India Company's history, seemed a contradiction in terms. Better informed at the Conference, they now understood the project to mean 'little more than the recognition of the Association as the representative of certain native States which have placed in its hands the administration of their [international] affairs'.⁷³ All that seemed to be implied was 'a native Confederation under European supervision'.⁷⁴ With these expectations the English eventually supported the German hypothesis as a means of thwarting French tariffs of their 'prey'. What it would mean in practice nobody, except perhaps the king, had more than the vaguest notion; and yet a new Congo state was born against all the odds, out of little more than Anglo-German love of free trade, a king's African romance and French hopes of becoming a stepfather.

However the territorial claims negotiated in association with the Conference at Berlin reached beyond the Congo, and set off partitions across the continent. The free access principles to be embodied in the General Act were also applied extensively to these bilateral settlements. Bismarck, as president, had invited the powers to take 'the opportunity of agreeing amongst themselves upon questions connected with the delimitation of [their] colonial establishments',⁷⁵ and at his suggestion, the leading

⁷¹ Ferry to Raindre, 8 Nov. 1884, *ibid.*, no. 446, 465-6; Bismarck to Ferry, 13 Sept. 1884 enclosed in Courcel to Ferry, 14 Sept. 1884, *ibid.*, no. 395, 405; Ferry to Courcel, 19 Sept. 1884, *ibid.*, no. 402, 415; Ferry, Note 22 Aug. 1884, *op. cit.*

⁷² Courcel to Ferry, 22 Nov. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 457, 477-8, 479-800.

⁷³ Granville to Malet, 24 November 1884, FO 403/47, no. 147, (no. 98 Africa).

⁷⁴ Anderson, 'Memo on West African Conference', 14 Oct. 1884, FO 403/46, no. 26-2; Malet to Granville, 5 Dec. 1884, Knaplund, *Letters from the Berlin Embassy*, 364-5.

⁷⁵ Bismarck, opening address to Berlin Conference, *Protocols*, 10.

delegates, consulting privately, one with another, steered the bilateral bargaining on 'analogous questions' in other parts of Africa.⁷⁶ The Germans and British accordingly worked together to give free trade and navigation the widest possible range over areas outside the scope of the formal agenda.

The bartering of territorial bids and free trade options stretched from the gulf of Guinea to Pacific islands. A Congo state in the making and the conventional free trade zone involved the geographic definition of their eastern borders with the western hinterlands of Zanzibar and Mozambique.⁷⁷ The principle of 'effective occupation' raised questions of British obligations in its paramountcies over the east coast. As early as October, the Foreign Office had perceived that the Conference's agenda involved the Egyptian hinterlands in the Sudan and the Red Sea, Zanzibar and the whole of the east coast with its Indian strategic and commercial connections, as well as relations with the Boers in the Transvaal and the Cape Colony's hinterland.⁷⁸ Claims in East Africa thus became involved with claims on the South and West. By December, vexed over German moves on Kilimanjaro, the Foreign Office was contemplating the necessity of an Anglo-German partition of East Africa. In return for recognizing Portuguese claims to the right bank of the Congo, the British and Germans went so far as to ask Lisbon for free access to the East African littoral north of Mozambique, with an assurance that Delagoa Bay would not be sold to a third power.⁷⁹ More than that, the Congo and Niger questions at the Conference continued to be involved with the Egyptian problem in the discussion of a general Anglo-German settlement of territorial disputes.

In an effort to mollify Bismarck's hostility over the Egyptian question, the British delegate Robert Meade, with the blessing of the British cabinet, offered to concede German claims in Togo, Cameroon, and Angra Pequena and to recognize the International Association, in return for a free hand on the Niger.⁸⁰ A general delimitation of British and German claims in the Pacific was included, over New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, and many other islands, to prevent a general scramble for territory there. When British ministers finally agreed to recognize the International Association in December, hopes of winning Bismarck's support over Egypt were decisive. As Granville remarked, 'I have urged concessions to a spoilt child, who happens, through Egypt, to have us a great deal in his power.' After talking with Meade, the German Chancellor finally snubbed the British offer with, 'I do not find your proposals sufficient.' When on 20 January 1885 he backed France over Egypt once again, the British decided that 'we should now cease to reckon on a conciliatory Bismarck and should act as we find it necessary . . . without going cap in hand to him'

⁷⁶ Malet to Granville, 13 Nov. 1884, FO 403/47, no. 82 (no. 51 Africa ext. 37). 'Prince Bismarck hopes territorial claims will be settled during Conference' (Malet to Granville, 21 Jan. 1885, FO 84/1820).

⁷⁷ Granville to Malet, 24 Nov. 1884, FO 403/47, no. 147 (no. 98 Africa).

⁷⁸ Anderson Minute Oct. 25 1884 on Hill Memorandum of 20 Oct. 1884: 'Conference our position on the East Coast of Africa is likely to be affected by.' 'It is undoubtedly true that France and Germany will soon be intriguing at Zanzibar' (FO 84/1813). See Foreign Office discussion of implications of effective occupation

for British spheres of influence on East Coast, Egypt, Pacific, etc. (FO 84/1820, *passim*). Also see Courcel to Ferry, 22 Nov. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 458, 478-80; and 23 Nov. 1884, no. 459, 680-2.

⁷⁹ Laboulaye to Ferry, 8 Jan. 1885, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 514, 537; Gladstone to Granville, 31 Dec. 1884 (Ramm, *Correspondence*, vol. 2, 310).

⁸⁰ Meade to Granville, 26 Nov., 4 Dec., 7 Dec. and 13 Dec. 1884; Herbert to Meade, 16 and 31 Dec.; Meade's Berlin Letter Book (Clan William/Meade Papers, D. 3044/J/17, PRO Belfast). Gladstone to Granville, 31 Dec. 1884 (Ramm, *Correspondence*, vol. 2, 309-10).

any longer.⁸¹ Without his Egyptian threat, the British would not have borne their humiliations at his hands, whether at the Conference or elsewhere.

Several Anglo-German delimitations nevertheless soon followed the Conference, partly as a result of Meade's approaches. After the British had annexed Bechuanaland in October and the remaining South African coasts in December, London and Berlin agreed to delimit the Angra Pequena hinterland.⁸² Four months after the Conference the two powers gave each other's traders equal access and protection throughout their west coast protectorates in terms of the Berlin Act,⁸³ and went on to apply its principles to East Africa when they divided their claims to the Zanzibar mainland in the Anglo-German Treaty of 1886.⁸⁴ Meanwhile, the French and Germans were delimiting their respective claims on the Guinea coast.⁸⁵ Free navigation on the Niger implied an Anglo-German settlement in the vicinity of the Cameroon, and an Anglo-French demarcation of their responsibilities eventually between the upper and lower rivers.⁸⁶ Several of these negotiations were initiated in the lobbies of the Conference and some were completed shortly afterwards. Although many of them might have taken place in any event, the Conference was largely responsible for bringing them all together to a head in Berlin. The 'honest broker' of Europe was clearly collecting in German protectorates and free trade options the dividends of an assembly showing that overseas tribute must be paid to his European preponderance.

As it was planned, so the Conference proceeded in the shadow of the Egyptian question. Bismarck's baton waved alike over 'excessive French appetites' for territory round Stanley Pool and British pretensions elsewhere. 'These men [Gladstone and Granville]', Bismarck said to Courcel, 'are the popinjays of politics, and seem to me like these old dandies who live on the reputation of success which they never had.'⁸⁷ The Chancellor joined with Ferry in threatening to reconvene in Paris the Egyptian financial conference⁸⁸ which Granville had dismissed from London, and talked of forcing the British to evacuate, thus keeping his bargain with the French over the Nile. Before the Berlin Conference ended, his Egyptian threat had thwacked the English out of dismantling the international financial control in Cairo into a decent respect for the debt commissioners' rights over the Anglo-Egyptian government's revenues.⁸⁹ By January 1885 the debt commission had been reinforced with German and Russian representatives. The British had abandoned their plan for an exclusive British loan for Egypt and bowed to the Franco-German call for an internationally guaranteed flotation.⁹⁰ Yet another conference was called to establish international rights of free navigation through the Suez Canal.⁹¹ Politically if not formally the Berlin Concert was bound up with this plethora of interacting negotiations from Cairo to the Cape.

⁸¹ Granville Minute is found in 'Cabinet Opinions on Recognition of International Association', Nov.-1 Dec. 1884, PRO 30/29/144. Bismarck's rejection is in Meade Memo, 24 Dec. 1884, no. 38a, Berlin Letter Book, op. cit. n. 80 above. The British reaction is in Herbert to Meade, 28 Jan. 1885, no. 69, *ibid.*; Meade Memo on talks with Busch, 7 Dec. 1884, no. 24b, *ibid.*; Granville to Meade, 17 Dec. 1884, no. 28, *ibid.*

⁸² Courcel to Ferry, 13 Mar. 1885, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 623, 651.

⁸³ Granville to Münster, 29 Apr. and 16 May 1885, Münster to Granville, 7 May 1885, C. 4442, nos. 1-5 (Gavin and Betley, *Scramble*, 123-5).

⁸⁴ *Africa and the Victorians*, 192-8.

⁸⁵ Courcel to Bismarck, Note on Franco-German accord, 30 Dec. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 412, 433.

⁸⁶ *Africa and the Victorians*, 300-3.

⁸⁷ Courcel to Ferry, 3 Dec. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 475, 502 (translated in Gavin and Betley, *Scramble*, 359); Courcel to Ferry, 23 Nov. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 460, 482.

⁸⁸ Courcel to Ferry, 11 Jan. 1885, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 518, 541-2; and 12 Jan. 1884, no. 520, 543-5.

⁸⁹ Waddington to Ferry, 22 Jan. 1885, *ibid.*, no. 533, 562-64.

⁹⁰ Ferry Circular Dispatch, 23 Jan. 1885, *ibid.*, no. 538, 568-89.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

As Granville observed, the full Conference was actually about which governments should guarantee its principles in which countries.⁹² Under Bismarck's expert management behind the scenes the negotiations went according to his design. With the leading delegates in harmony over the main principles, Malet expected that the Conference would complete its work before Christmas.⁹³ But significantly the treaty could not be agreed until 26 February 1885, when the necessary bilateral settlements were completed. 'The work', Courcel reported, 'had been slowed down, in order to give time for the interested parties to end all the arrangements relating to territorial delimitations with the International Association',⁹⁴ which defined the bounds of a Congo state. When all was ready, Leopold's emissaries entered from the wings to sign the treaty with the powers, every one of which had made a separate recognition agreement.⁹⁵ The scratching pens turned the private Association into an internationally constituted state⁹⁶ within the agreed territorial frontiers which Bismarck had defined beforehand.

At Berlin the free trade treaty and the bilateral territorial agreements over the Congo and Niger regions were clearly conditional, the one on the other. The intervention of the European Concert had been so arranged by Bismarck that the interested parties had to subscribe to free trade before their claims could be generally accepted; and the claims had to be satisfied to some extent before claimants would subscribe to the free trade treaty. The interdependence of the two sides of the bargain holds the key to the paradox of a Conference which founded a free trade regime on an exclusive partition of territory.

The collective Act signified a consensus of international interests in equal access to the Congo and Niger Rivers, which suggests a commercial and anticolonial interpretation of the proceedings; whereas the bilateral agreements represented compromises between competing national and association claims, which suggests a territorial and proto-colonial meaning. The ambivalence between the two sides of the bargain is reflected in the riddle of alternative half-truths in the historiography. Emphasizing one side or the other, it is possible to argue either that partition was a necessary means to free trade or that free trade was rhetoric for territorial acquisitions. It has been debated whether the partitioners meant the partition to avert the liability of, or to prepare the way for, colonial possessions. It has even been held that the Conference did not in fact partition Africa,⁹⁷ but merely divided free trade obligations territorially among European governments. Given that the free trade treaty and the territorial arrangements were interdependent, neither the purely commercial nor the simple colonial view can be more than half true of the intentions of any one power, still less of the Conference as a whole. The whole truth is mixed up in the interdependence of multilateral and bilateral decisions. But the riddle remains. Did free trade require partition or did colonial partition pay lip service to free trade. If the Conference is to make sense, a balance of judgement has to be struck over certain ambiguities in the proceedings: one is the sincerity or disingenuousness of the treaty; another is its

⁹² Granville to Malet, 7 Nov. 1884, C. 4241, no. 1. 'It must be precisely indicated to what territories the rules adopted . . . will apply' (Ferry to Courcel, 19 Sept. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 402, 415-16).

⁹³ Malet to Granville, 20 Dec. 1884 (Knaplund, *Letters from the Berlin Embassy*, 369); Malet to Granville, 25 Nov.

1884, FO 403/47/186 (Gavin and Betley, *Scramble*, 75).

⁹⁴ Courcel to Ferry, 20 Jan. 1885, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 530, 558; Malet to Granville, 25 Nov. 1884, FO 403/47/186.

⁹⁵ *Protocols*, 262 ff.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 282, 302-3.

⁹⁷ See below, Prof. Hargreaves's paper.

feasibility or futility in Africa, and the last is the colonial or anticolonial intent of the partitioners.

On balance in these papers, the treaty is interpreted as a genuine attempt to internationalize future trade in Central Africa. That the powers invented a Congo state to take the lion's share of territory says little for their colonial ambitions but a great deal for their free trading zeal. Had it been the other way about, an individual king, without official backing from the Belgium government, would not have been so lucky. The policy of free trading Germans and British and protectionist French and Portuguese alike was to subscribe to free trade in each other's actual or prospective trading areas, while claiming exclusive spheres of influence to secure their own. More than foreign ministers dabbling in commerce, the merchants of Hamburg, Rotterdam, and Manchester bitterly opposed to all taxes on African trade and therefore to any form of colonial administration, were clamouring for such a treaty, while missionary churches, like the counting houses, pressed for open access wherever it would serve to denominational advantage. Of all the easy insurances on offer in Berlin, a hypothetical Congo state was the cheapest: it gave every delegate something for nothing to take home. The probability is therefore that all the powers genuinely subscribed to a free trade treaty which promised to work to the national advantage of each in the greater part of the area in question. Such a judgement would dispose of the paradox of protectionist governments adopting African free trade.

Certain aspects of the partition strengthen this case for a commercial interpretation of the Conference. The conventional Congo basin, by far the largest area delimited at Berlin, was allocated collectively for purposes of free trade. The area included in the zone east and south of the Congo state could have served no other purpose. Several delegates indeed proposed to include the entire Zambezi River basin and Zanzibar coasts in the conventional free trade zones, while the British, Americans, and Germans wanted the free navigation principle to embrace all the great rivers of Africa. What is more, a Congo state would not have come into existence at the instant of signing the treaty, had it not been required as the agent of free trade in the bulk of the conventional zone. Conceivably, a collective ban on commercially exclusive treaties with African chiefs might have achieved equal access without partition, but several such treaties had already been officially proclaimed in Europe, and to resign them would not have been practical politics. Nevertheless, when combined with individual territorial obligations to observe its provisions, the treaty promised to nullify the commercially exclusive effect of existing African alliances and outlaw the negotiation of trade monopolies of this kind throughout the region in future. On these grounds the Conference as a whole evidently saw partition as a necessary instrument of free trade. The good faith of the signatories of the treaty however also depends on how the territorial settlements are to be construed.

At first sight there is an equally good case for a proto-colonial interpretation of the partition of the Conference. Granville like Ferry pondered 'the contingency of the disappearance of native rule, and of the eventual subjection of the tribes'⁹⁸ to the Congo state. Leopold clearly had plans for administering and exploiting his new monarchy eventually, while the French and Portuguese envisaged colonizing their claims in the distant future.⁹⁹ The leading partitioners at Berlin, with the exception of

⁹⁸ Fitzmaurice to Hutton, 10 May 1884, C. 4023, no. 50.

⁹⁹ See below, Dr. Smith's paper; Axelson, *Portugal and the Scramble passim*.

Germany, were after all professional colonial powers, and they took each other's colonial aspirations seriously enough to take measures in the treaty for their mutual frustration. Moreover, those most suspected of exclusive trade practices and colonial designs were the appointed guarantors of equal access to the Congo and the Niger Rivers. It seemed to journalists at the time that 'the august assembly [at Berlin] has begun apportioning territory and disposing of several millions of people for all the world like the Sovereigns who partitioned Poland. The States represented at Berlin have also . . . begun making private arrangements behind the back of the Conference. . . . There is nothing very new in the story. Philanthropic gabble about raising populations and promoting civilization commonly ends in this sort of thing.'¹⁰⁰ The African partition in fact had little in common with border powers occupying a consolidated European kingdom. There were no Polands in Central Africa to occupy. Nevertheless, the partition was already exciting the imperial imagination of Europe, and 'cities governed by Europeans and reached by European steamers and railways' were forecast all over the interior 'if the process continues'.¹⁰¹ With the rest of Europe, the Conference assumed without question that tropical Africa would be colonized within the next two or three decades. Their faith in the inevitability of 'inorganic' Afro-Asian peoples falling under the thrall of Europe's 'organic' nations was testified in the 'trusteeship' sentiments of the General Act.¹⁰² All this however was either stock exchange speculation or soothsaying in 1884.

It does not necessarily follow that the partitioners were staking out the ground for future colonies. If Bismarck had wanted a proper German colonial empire, he could have had Leopold's share of the Congo for the asking, but the Germans, with the British, were against taking colonial possession of their tropical African protectorates, while Ferry, giving priority to colonial prospects South East Asia had no serious designs on the Congo, beyond an adequate hinterland for the Gabon Colony up to Stanley Pool.¹⁰³ The partitioners unable to foresee what partition would imply in the end were taking a leap in the dark. As men of affairs, it was not their business to look into the future, but to decide what was diplomatically practical for the time being. The veteran colonial statesmen realized that the Congolese fantasies exciting geographic and philanthropic societies in Europe had been orchestrated largely by the International Association, or railway projectors and shippers looking for government subsidies. A century and more of frustrating experience showed that the expense of rough-hewing tropical Africa into the international economy would not repay colonial administration.¹⁰⁴ They therefore preferred to resign the bulk of the territorial claims to others and wait for the African trade to grow.

At Berlin ironically the powers with the strength to overcome African resistance were resolved against colonizing the Congo and Niger, while those with visions of colonies lacked the wealth and power required to fulfil them. The Portuguese, who surely had imperial designs on the Congo, were pathetically short of the necessary resources; and, as they obstructed international trade most, they received the least share of the Congo basin. Without doubt King Leopold had colonial ambitions, but he had no means of substantiating his state in the foreseeable future. His wealth of paper claims provided

¹⁰⁰ 'The Congo Conference', *The Saturday Review*, 29 Nov. 1884, 685.

¹⁰¹ 'The Invasion of Africa', *Spectator*, 6 Dec. 1884.

¹⁰² *Protocols*, 9-11.

¹⁰³ Ferry, Note, 22 Aug. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5 no. 376, 378.

¹⁰⁴ *The Economist*, 8 Mar. 1884, 627; 30 Aug. 1890, 1109; 8 Oct. 1892, 1262.

no security for bankers and investors. It is true that he showed Bismarck a map of his state divided into administrative prefectures,¹⁰⁵ but this was the stuff of the association's public relations. Professor Stengers' article suggests that the king had no serious plans for extensive administration until after 1890,¹⁰⁶ when he was allowed to levy import duties at last. By that time his impoverishment in trade wars with the Africans forced him to begin auctioning large concessions of land to capitalist syndicates. Whether the territorial claimants intended to create large colonies in the heart of Africa or not, they were not practical propositions in 1885. At that time Leopold was looking to a French lottery to save his enterprise from bankruptcy.¹⁰⁷ His Congo railway project failed to attract capital, and clearly his state could do no more than rig up a shadowy hegemony over part of the river banks. The experienced colonial hands who had appointed him chief guardian of free trade thought him foolhardy to undertake the office. If he broke the treaty, he could be leaned on, if he succeeded in the end, their manufacturers and investors would benefit from a native confederation under European guidance. The Congo state, it is sometimes argued, signified colonization by proxy; some proxy! On the contrary, the treaty imposed unprecedented handicaps on would-be colonizers for the sake of free trade,¹⁰⁸ which suggests that the partitioners saw no immediate prospect of occupying their claims on the ground.

The case for a commercial or anticolonial interpretation of the Conference may also be argued from another point of view. Colonial powers intent on founding new colonies rarely stopped to ask permission from the Concert of Europe and presumably the Austrian, Russian, and Ottoman emperors took little stock in West African palm oil or peanuts. None of the governments represented was about to go to war with its neighbours as yet over relatively trivial commercial options in tropical Africa. The idea that the Conference was called to avoid the outbreak of war in Europe over a scramble for colonies in Africa is a characteristically Bismarckian invention.¹⁰⁹ It was surely the Chancellor who had puffed Egyptian quarrels and overseas disputes into the 'crisis' which he then summoned the Conference to manage.¹¹⁰

As the reader of these papers will find, it is easier to make sense of the Conference on anticolonial, rather than proto-colonial assumptions. Ferry's paradox of the feasibility or futility of the treaty in Africa is a case in point. Ambassadors, advised by African merchants and explorers, were well aware that trading profits in tropical Africa depended on quasi-monopolistic arrangements with networks of African states, each of which took its toll of the routes.¹¹¹ They were also aware that where few indigenous organizations of large scale existed there could in effect be no free market, and where no administrative revenue or differential trading profits were allowed, free trade could not be imposed on myriads of competing local African authorities. Yet the Conference outlawed import duties and administrative taxes in the treaty, and so seems to have done its best to make both free trade and colonial occupation more difficult at the

¹⁰⁵ Courcel to Ferry, 21 Sept. 1884, Report of Chancellor's visit to French embassy on 20 Sept. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 405.

¹⁰⁶ See below Prof. Stenger's paper.

¹⁰⁷ Courcel to Ferry, 5 Jan. 1885, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 508, 553.

¹⁰⁸ Ferry, Note, 22 Aug. 1884, *ibid.*, no. 376, 378.

¹⁰⁹ Bismarck's closing address, *Protocols*, 301.

¹¹⁰ W. Baumgart, *Imperialism: The Idea and Reality of British and French Colonial Expansion 1880-1914*, Oxford 1982.

¹¹¹ See R. Oliver and G. Sanderson (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Africa*; vol. 6, *From 1870-1905*, (Cambridge, 1985) ch. 1, pp. 4-6.

outset. Other means of financing territorial possession would ultimately be found in taxing the African and granting land concessions, but these expedients called for administrative control. How was pacification and control to be achieved and maintained in the first place without revenue?¹¹² The perversity of the Conference in handicapping would-be colonizers is hard to account for on a proto-colonial hypothesis. But supposing the powers were deliberately working to thwart each other's suspected colonial ambitions, and distributed claims to frustrate rival occupations, then the apparent discrepancy between the intentions professed in the treaty and the territorial implications of the partition would diminish considerably. Again it is easy to understand why the Conference failed to make rules governing 'effective occupation' in the interior if the interior was not about to be occupied for the time being. The Conference knew that there could be no free market without European intervention to provide the necessary *pax*, but no matter if the claimants were not about to occupy the bulk of their territories. All they could reasonably be asked to undertake at the time was to provide equal access to coastal and riparian enclaves which their consuls and traders might do inexpensively with the aid of an occasional gunboat. Presumably the African rulers would go on ruling these countries for the foreseeable future. They would be drawn gradually under European supervision as expanding commerce required and the profits of equal trade allowed.

It seems therefore that the Conference had European free trade rather than territorial occupation in mind, when it made partition dependent on acceptance of the General Act. Such an interpretation would reduce the paradox of the feasibility of the treaty in Africa. Given that the African would go on ruling, the Conference could reasonably draw lines around entire river basins and divide them into national zones, with the object of binding Europeans to allow access in future. A partition of this kind did not of course involve dividing Africa itself; African empire-builders were still doing that, as General Gordon, prospective governor of the notional Congo State, was finding at Khartoum while the Conference deliberated. The partitioners were simply carving up the map, a theoretic exercise in one continent which was so far a non-event in the other. A speculative division cost little on diplomatic paper and no serious colonial incentive was required to activate the process. Assuming that the purpose of partition was to bind Europeans to free trade, the further spheres of influence were extended, the more extensively Europeans would be bound and the better free trade prospects would be secured. Without this premiss, it is almost impossible to explain why the great colonial powers should have resigned so much prospective colonial territory at Berlin. Interpreted in an anticolonial sense, the Congolese partition thus becomes more understandable, whereas construed in a colonial sense, it becomes unbelievable. As the American ambassador Kasson put it to the Conference:

It is difficult to find a motive in this new country of Central Africa which would justify the existence of Colonies which are dependent from a military point of view upon foreign powers. They are generally founded with a view to exclusively insuring certain commercial advantages,

¹¹² Commenting on an address by Stanley on the Congo question, *The Economist* on 20 Sept. 1884 observed: 'He promised that the International African Association will offer ample facilities . . . to the traders of all nations . . . "we will guarantee the peace between you, and all your agreements with the natives we shall see

religiously kept." But . . . he failed to make it clear who is to protect the protector. The Association can only help others on condition that it is itself assisted. . . . It cannot be said that Mr. Stanley has succeeded in showing how [this difficulty] is to be overcome' (p. 1139); Ferry, Note, 22 Aug. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 376, 378.

or for the purpose of turning them to some practical account in time of war. But here we have announced that there will be no exclusive advantages; the first reason is then non-existent. As regards their usefulness in time of war, what would be the good of possessing, for the purpose of military operations abroad, a dependent Colony above the falls of Yellala? From the moment when possession of a Colony does not take for granted its commercial monopoly, it ceases to have any value for a foreign Government. The revenues which it would bring in to the mother country would never be equal to the expenses which its maintenance would require.¹¹³

A verdict in favour of a primarily free trade objective thus reduces the central paradox of a Conference which distributed exclusive options on territory in order to secure free trade futures. It does not resolve it however. 'Partition'¹¹⁴ could mean one thing to the whole Conference and another thing to the interested parties, and whatever the diplomats intended, they had little power over the effects of their arrangements in Africa. It has also to be admitted that the cartography under the treaty signified more than commercial enlightenment. There was more to the staking of claims than sharing trade generously with other nations and, apart from the control of shipping routes and naval coaling stations involved on coasts, the beneficiaries did have inland 'colonies of the future' in mind. Whether for merchant ships or naval vessels, coastal entrepôts required a hinterland with secured river, road, or rail connections to local markets and supplies.

Spheres of influence moreover, were symbols of national prestige; indeed, the claimants professed themselves as vulnerable to jingo sentiment in domestic politics against yielding claims as they were to mercantile pressure for free trade. Excited by the scramble in Africa dramatized by the Conference in Europe, *Demos* was already enthused with illusions of imperial proprietorship from maps showing imaginary spheres in national colours.¹¹⁵ Public opinion took little account of nice legal distinctions between colonial annexations such as those in South Africa, west coast protectorates with a minimal European presence, and hypothetical spheres which merely called for a fleeting explorer, a few treaties, and international agreement. All alike were mistaken for real empire and in this sense, paper partition signified colonies in Europe long before it signified much in Africa. The spheres of influence may have been intended merely to define territorial responsibilities under the treaty, but they also awakened national pressure to occupy them, and the pride of possession evoked could be relied upon sooner or later to make the claims good on the ground, in reaction to any European or African questioning.

Much more important, the spheres whether under the Berlin Treaty or otherwise, were deliberately exclusive and pre-emptive in political effect. Once they were agreed,

¹¹³ Kasson Statement, 10 Dec. 1884, *Protocols*, Annexe no. 13, 163-4.

¹¹⁴ The term 'partition of Africa' seems to have appeared first as a headline in the *The Times* on 7 Nov. 1884 referring to Sir Rawson Rawson's 'The Territorial Partition of the Coast of Africa', *Proceedings of Royal Geographical Society*, Nov. 1884, no. 11.

¹¹⁵ For one example, see effect of maps showing German recognition of International Association's claims on French enthusiasm for Brazza's treaties, see Courcel to Hatzfeldt, 5 Dec. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 477, 504-6. Stieler's *Atlas*, 1883 (Perther of Gotha) showed St Lucia

Bay and the whole coast of Zululand in English colours; and in another German map in 1885 (same publisher) in German colours (FO to Vivian, 28 Feb. 1885, PRO 30/29/198). See also Sir E. Hertslet, *The Map of Africa by Treaty*, 3 vols., London 1894; J. Scott Keltie, *The Partition of Africa*, London 1893 and Keltie 'What Stanley has done for the map of Africa', *The Contemporary Review*, 1890, 126-40; 'German Aims in East Africa', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, May 1890, no. 147, 689-708; Map, 'Stations, Dockyards and Coaling Ports of the British Navy showing British possessions and submarine cable', *Illustrated London News*, 1 Nov. 1884, no. 85, 440.

other European governments resigned their right to intervene in the area, usually in return for equivalent privileges elsewhere. Although they retained consular representation, the claimant secured exclusive control over the area's international relations without the liability of colonial occupation. The claimant's nationals now enjoyed a reserved monopoly of dealings with the African rulers of the country. A sphere of influence thus deprived indigenous leaders of the possibility of alternative European allies, and confronted with a single European nation, their potential bargaining strength was reduced considerably.

The political effect of partition speaks little for its capacity as an instrument of free trade in the long run, however promising it might have seemed theoretically in the short run. A free hand in negotiating with the webs of local indigenous authorities through which commerce in tropical Africa was inevitably conducted had more than political consequences. Where trading partnerships with African suppliers were bound up with alliances with African rulers, Berlin Treaty or no Berlin Treaty, political monopoly meant commercial monopoly in practice. It is not surprising therefore, that the treaty combined with the partition to defeat the avowed free trade object. In effect the Conference decreed equal access for allcomers in defiance of the economic laws of the African market, and the constitutions of its polymorphic societies. In this light the ambivalence between the two sides of the Berlin settlement persists, to question the African feasibility and therefore the sincerity of the treaty. However, the inconsistency between intentions professed and decisions taken was much less at the time than appears in hindsight, since the Conference foresaw no immediate possibility of the claimants occupying their reserved monopoly positions. It could also be argued that the paradox was not one of the Conference's making, but one of Africa's. In that case, it can never be resolved. The Conference nevertheless can hardly be interpreted primarily as a free trade operation, without two powerful qualifications: first, although the Conference as a whole endorsed partition as a means to free trade, the interested claimants naturally looked upon it also as a way of winning colonial options. Second, as experienced colonial statesmen such as Ferry and Granville suspected at the time, Bismarck's strategy for securing free trade for Germany in Africa by means of partition rested on a false premiss.

Thinking in European terms, the Conference clearly intended the free trade Treaty to govern the partition of territory in Africa, but in Africa the partition was to govern the operation of the treaty. The priorities were bound to be reversed when translated from one continent to the other. So long as Europe was unable or unwilling to occupy the spheres allocated and impose free trade on the Africans to any great extent, it was reasonable to suppose that equal access to coasts and rivers would guarantee free trade eventually in the partitioned hinterlands. Meanwhile, the treaty could have little practical effect there. But, as soon as the claimants began occupying their spheres, things turned out differently. The more they 'pacified' their claims, the more desperately they needed revenue and the less they could afford to share their commercial profits with foreign traders. In this way, the provisions of the treaty proved impracticable as soon as its guarantors began acquiring the authority necessary to apply them extensively. Encountering stiffening African resistance and badgered by metropolitan treasurers to make local operations pay their own way, the European officials and companies responsible soon required and commanded administrative

means of discriminating against foreign merchants, far more effective than unequal tariffs or transit tolls. So it proved with the monopolistic commercial practices of the British chartered company charged with the duty of carrying the treaty out on the lower Niger, and so by 1890 the finances of the Congo state dictated state monopolies of the ivory and rubber trade, as well as the sale of concessions conscripting African land and labour.¹¹⁶ The outcome was not altogether unforeseen at the time. In endorsing the partition the Conference had endowed the claimants with an anticipatory sovereignty which pre-empted the untapped economic resources of their spheres. As Ferry's law had predicted, partition in the name of free trade prepared the way for colonial monopolies in African reality.

In the perspective of its own time however the proceedings at Berlin have to be judged essentially as an event in European, rather than African history. It was at least possible for Europe to bind European governments to equal access in a treaty governing their various territorial claims and an extensive partition was necessary, if their individual obligations to observe it were to be defined. The great range of the paper partition at Berlin is hard to account for on any other premiss, when none of the beneficiaries was ready or equipped to occupy more than a tiny portion of their spheres.

To legislate for Europeans was all that the Conference had the power to accomplish for the time being, in Central Africa. In this view, the Conference appears with a face quite different from the one usually presented. It can be seen that the assembly as a whole gave priority to international commerce over imperial advantage. Such a reappraisal suggests that the Africa question on the agenda was no mere marker for manoeuvres between European alliances, although it served the European and Egyptian purposes of the leading powers. It also suggests that there was more to the proceedings than a contest for national prestige, an election stunt, or a squalid chaffering of paper claims. What is most striking is the grandiose idea inspiring the negotiations. In the end whatever its illusions the Conference has to be seen as an exercise of the European imagination, a typical expression of the contemporary world view.

The notion of deciding the future of central Africa when it was mostly unknown had risen like a mirage out of the first flush of discovery. Statesmen believed that Stanley's expeditions from the east coast had discovered the rivers 'which bring the central districts [of Africa] into communication with the [west] coast. An important field of commerce had clearly been opened up.'¹¹⁷ At the mouth of the Congo several powers were disputing for control of the last great riverain entrance into Central Africa available on the western seaboard, while the International Association's expeditions up river promised to take in the rear the west coast barrier, which African middleman states had kept up against European penetration for centuries. As Granville saw it in March 1883, 'The complete revolution of the condition of the African continent has necessitated a change of treatment . . . an arrangement . . . based upon principles of freedom and equal advantages to all countries would greatly contribute to prevent rivalries and jealousies, so likely to be injurious to a rising trade.'¹¹⁸ With similar risks

¹¹⁶ *Africa and the Victorians*, 181-2, 184-5; J. Stengers, 'The Congo Free State and the Belgium Congo before 1914' in L. Gann and P. Duignan (eds.), *Colonialism in*

Africa 1870-1960, 5 vols., Cambridge 1969-75, vol. 1, 272.

¹¹⁷ Granville to d'Antas, 15 Mar. 1883, C. 3885, no. 8.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

proliferating all around the east and west coasts, an international order was needed before it was too late.

In planning the Conference, Bismarck inflated Granville's idea to cover most of tropical Africa, in the belief that, after drawing every other one into its toils, the international economy was on the verge of invading the centre of the last continent. In Berlin the African experts, explorers, traders, and jaded diplomats alike responded enthusiastically to the German chancellor's call for an international order to prepare the way. The technology was ready in the steamer, the railway, and the medicine bag, and it may be at the time the aspiration to bring Africa into the international economy in the name of 'civilization' was no more humbug than the progressive developmental theories of today.

To find their new order the Conference looked backwards into the future. Recalling the spread of great European wars in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to the Americas and Asia,¹¹⁹ they talked of neutralizing Africa, on the venerable principle of 'no European war beyond the line'. Their new commercial regime was no less retrospective. Appreciating how the first industrial nation had employed 'free trade imperialism' to attract independent countries into world trade, they tried to construct Central Africa into the international capitalist economy, in similar terms of commerce without domination.¹²⁰ Steeped in their own history, the Europeans believed the Africans had none worth considering apart from that of slave trading, and discounting the sombre annals of savage wars with Indians, Maoris, Ashantis, Zulus, and Kaffirs, they dealt with Central Africa as if it were uninhabited for practical purposes. A notional free state held their international project together. With the king of a neutralized Belgium connected dynastically to all the European courts and affiliated ecclesiastically to the Vatican as ruler, the state's international credentials seemed unimpeachable. It could be expected to do all that was needed to provide the necessary international framework. Inserted into the middle of Africa, the new monarchy would forestall the outbreak of scrambles over vast regions, act as the neutral core of European peace in the area, and develop the free trade centre of a new branch of world economy. Meanwhile, an international commission was to ensure equal access until the hypothetical state was strong enough to provide it. The commission in fact never came into operation,¹²¹ but the idea captivated the diplomatic mind, and it is the conception that gives the Conference its unique place in modern intercontinental relations. On no other occasion has the concert of nations in one continent precast an international regime for another in anticipation of economic penetration, before establishing relations with its actual rulers.¹²²

The Berlin plan seemed sensible enough in 1884. An international frame to regulate inter-European relations in Central Africa was urgently needed, when the occupation of Egypt combined with the Mahdist revolt in its Sudanese provinces had already precipitated a scramble for the upper Nile and Red Sea coasts,¹²³ while Anglo-Boer

¹¹⁹ See Courcel to Ferry, 25 Apr. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 249, 268-71; 28 Sept. 1884, no. 407, 424; 20 Jan. 1885, no. 530, 556-7.

¹²⁰ See J. Gallagher and R. Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', *Economic History Review*, Mar. 1953; B. Semmel, *The Imperialism of Free Trade, 1750-1850*, Cambridge 1970.

¹²¹ *Protocols*, 126-8, 142-6.

¹²² *The Economist*, 15 Nov. 1884, 1383.

¹²³ G. N. Sanderson, *England, Europe and the Upper Nile*, Edinburgh 1965, 88-94; A. Ramm, 'Great Britain and the Planting of Italian Power in the Red Sea, 1868-1885', *English Historical Review*, 59, 1944, 211-35.

and Anglo-German rivalries were approaching the area from the south.¹²⁴ Spheres of influence had mediated much more serious European disputes in Poland, the Balkans, and North Africa, where boundaries were marked out on the ground and intervening areas were under central administration. Without doubt, Bismarck envisaged extending to Central Africa the kind of Ottoman partition that had 'saved the peace of Europe' at the Berlin Congress six years earlier. The 'Open Door' was another trusty expedient taken from Oriental empires, whose rulers with control over millions of subjects were able to protect international commerce on a large scale without European occupations. In principle, there was nothing absurd in the plan from the standpoint of regulating inter-European relations. All the precedents of European diplomacy were in favour, only tropical Africa defied such treatment. With its fragmented communities mostly unsubjected to Leviathan's iron laws and taxes, the region offered few states with the authority required to open up free trade or quell xenophobic reaction to any great extent. Nor did partition work its accustomed effects there. Unlike previous partitions in Europe and the Ottoman empire, the lines projected along unknown watersheds or latitudes on maps in Berlin corresponded to no historic frontiers, but divided whole peoples, so that the partition had no recognizable physical representation on the ground in Africa. Under these conditions, spheres of influence precipitated further scrambles to establish where their frontiers were in fact, and consequently, partition stimulated the territorial rivalries it was intended to prevent. Far from the Congo state insulating Central Africa from the scramble on the coasts, the international stop-gap proliferated scrambles in the interior all around its indefinite borders and within five years its agents were disputing claims with the British at the source of the Nile¹²⁵ and with their South Africa Company in Katanga. Partition provoked many more extensive territorial disputes than it averted.

The expedient proved no less self-defeating for purposes of ruling competition in Africa out of European politics. With the approval of the Concert, partitioning Africa became fashionable not only as a way of giving and taking free trade options, but as a method of securing every conceivable future commercial or strategic national interest, however minute or speculative: sometimes merely for the sake of 'having something in one's pocket' to exchange for diplomatic advantage elsewhere. Thus the bartering of prospective spheres of influence initiated at Berlin gave tropical Africa a spurious importance in the eyes of Europe. As a result, disputes over claims became ever more deeply involved in great power politics, and the longer the game went on, the more seriously it was taken until no more of the continent remained to divide. Although one or two of the Berlin partitioners had their forebodings, none of them could have foreseen the extent to which partition in Africa was swiftly to frustrate their international theory.

How then does this review reflect on the role of the Conference in the general partition and subsequent colonization of Africa? The gathering cannot be blamed of course for the scramble along the west coasts; competition had been going on there 'since the Phoenicians', as James Keltie noted in his original account of the partition published in 1893. By the time of meeting, the western littoral had been divided almost completely into formalized colonial footholds and protectorates, with the notable

¹²⁴ D. M. Schreuder, *The Scramble for Southern Africa, 1877-1895*, Cambridge 1980.

¹²⁵ Sanderson, *Upper Nile*, 88-94.

exception of the Congo estuary. On the eastern and southern seaboard, little remained to divide after the various agreements of 1886, many of which had been initiated at Berlin during the Conference. But, in view of the interdependence of the bilateral and multilateral agreements involved in setting up the Congo state, the Conference surely began the wholesale carving of Central Africa into spheres of influence. It is true, it was not a partition of Africa, except in European international law, nor was it primarily a partition of colonies, although some of the interested parties were staking out the ground with that object in mind. The leading powers who decided the issue were clearly intent on avoiding colonial liabilities, on averting a scramble for the interior, and frustrating the supposed colonial ambitions of their rivals. The object of partition was anticolonial, and yet a colonial future was implied. In recognizing spheres of influence, especially in creating a new state without effective international supervision in the name of free trade, the Conference had in effect disposed of territories and peoples as potential colonial possessions. What is more, the Congo Conference was but part of a broader German drive to win free trade by partition, and so its bilateral proceedings were closely associated with the division of East Africa and the Guinea coast.

The probability is therefore that the intervention of the European Concert at Berlin set off the partition of tropical Africa as a whole into spheres of influence. It may be that European commercial rivalry intensified on the west coasts in the early 'eighties, that the irruption of German consuls exacerbated the competition, that French and Portuguese treaty-makers became increasingly aggressive, and that African wars were blocking European trading more frequently. But it is difficult to believe that all these local crises on the margins put together could have generated the wholesale division of the heart of Africa from coast to coast by 'continuous creation'¹²⁶ within six years. The delimitation was projected far in advance of any existing trading frontiers. To make pre-emptive cartography necessary on such a scale, the future of Central Africa had to be drawn into the working of grand diplomacy.

Bismarck had entangled the one in the other in calling the Conference, with the help of his Egyptian threat to the British and French empires and German troops in Metz. Without doubt, the quarrel between Britain and France over Egypt gave him his chance of intervening decisively in Africa and the Pacific, which otherwise their naval and colonial supremacy would have denied. The revolts of Urabi and the Mahdi on the Nile leading Gladstone into bondage in Cairo had disrupted the Anglo-French *entente* and altered European alignments in Germany's favour. These changes not only set off a scramble for North East Africa, they made a German-inspired partition of the tropics possible.¹²⁷ But the extension there did not necessarily follow until Bismarck casually exploited his opportunity in that direction for European purposes and toyed with the idea of making elbow-room for the growing German industrial economy in a world already largely pre-empted by older colonial powers. In reaction they learned the lesson of the Conference. Britain and France were not to be caught napping again without a sphere of influence to safeguard their slightest prospective interest. By 1890

¹²⁶ For an explanation of the scramble see G. N. Sanderson, 'The European Partition of Africa: Coincidence or Conjunction?' *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 3, no. 1, Oct. 1974.

¹²⁷ For the Egyptian factor in the partition see *Africa and the Victorians*, 2nd edn. 1981, cf. Louis, *Robinson and Gallagher Controversy*, 27-32.

as a result the British premier, Lord Salisbury, could be congratulated with Bismarck on completing the partition of Africa. 'If so be that it secures a temporary abatement of the African fever, it will have been well worth doing.'¹²⁸ It was easy to achieve on paper. It would not be so easy to achieve on the ground.

Perspective on the origin of the tropical African partition changes when international trade is seen as a serious concern of the Berlin Concert.¹²⁹ The Conference was the centre piece of Bismarck's energetic pursuit of free trade of Germany in regions pioneered by older colonial powers. His strategy must be given pride of place among the many possible causes of the tropical partition. British free trade imperialism had opened the older empires of Spain, Portugal, and the Orient to international commerce, and so long as England enjoyed the competitive advantage in open markets, free trade achieved the object of national oligopoly. Emulating this example, Bismarck conceived of turning the same trick on the British world system in Africa. On the same principles and with the same object inside and out of the Conference, German free trade imperialism was largely responsible for turning what had been a number of disparate commercial disputes on coasts into a comprehensive diplomatic partition of the heart of Africa.

Under German leadership, the Conference extended spheres of influence great distances ahead of an international economy which was only nibbling at the edges of tropical Africa. Legitimate trade with the west coast had grown for two decades past to a value of the order of eight million pounds sterling annually by 1884, and as Dr Newbury shows, it had a remarkably international character.¹³⁰ Explorers looking for mineral finds and other resources were announcing paths for future economic invasion with the flourish of advertisers. Railway projects were being touted on stock exchanges and among the crowned heads of Europe. Their prospectuses projected rivalry for territorial control between European and indigenous states over great distances before ever a sleeper was laid, and imaginary locomotives hauled trains of informal imperialism at high speed. They all promised to connect the ports to the centre of Africa, whether to span the cataracts on the Congo, join Angra Pequena to Pretoria and Delagoa Bay, link Tunis or Algeria with Kano, Zanzibar with Kilimanjaro, or Dakar and St Louis with Timbuktu.¹³¹ These chimeras provided much of the inspiration for the partition initiated at Berlin. But railways could not be built and run, whether for economic or military objects, without some form of territorial control or without some kind of international understanding. As yet prospectors had not struck the gold and minerals needed to attract capital into Central Africa, as they had done in Australia, British Columbia, and South Africa. Europe, the 'world's banker', refused to invest in putative railways running through theoretic claims over countries believed to be in a state of barbarous anarchy. Diplomats and traders might anticipate the need for an international order, but the capitalists of Europe had no urgent need of developing

¹²⁸ *The Review of Reviews*, vol. 2, no. 9, Sept. 1890, 209.

¹²⁹ On the working of the European concert over the Greek, Tunisian, Moroccan, and Eastern Questions in the aftermath of the Berlin Congress, see W. N. Medlicott, *Bismarck, Gladstone and the Concert of Europe*, London 1956.

¹³⁰ See below.

¹³¹ On railway projects to open the centre of Africa, see H. M. Stanley, *The Congo and the Founding of the Free*

State, 2 vols., London 1885; Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, ch. 11; K. & E. Wilburn, 'The Climax of Railway Competition in South Africa, 1887-99', (Oxford D. Phil. thesis, 1983); T. W. Roberts, 'Railway Imperialism and the French Advance towards Lake Chad, 1873-95' (Cambridge Ph.D. thesis, 1973); C. W. Newbury and A. S. Kanya-Forstner, 'French Policy and the Origins of the Scramble in West Africa', *Journal of African History*, 10 (1969), 253-76.

tropical Africa, and the Berlin plan had no solid grounding in structural shifts in European banking and industry until the region was brought under some form of European control. In spite of the premonitions of Bismarck and Granville in 1884, the international economy was not about to develop the centre of Africa. From an economic point of view the Berlin scheme was largely unnecessary, and the greater part of the partition was premature. It was essentially the work of diplomatists regulating future inter-European relations in African commerce, from the standpoint of the balance of power in the world at large.

Without the backing of a drive in Europe to develop the region, the diplomatic tinkering at Berlin made little impression on the continuities in Africa, and the Conference was powerless to determine the effect of its agreement there. For all the ingenuity spent in the Reich chancellery on arranging free trade among Europeans, the internal trade of the Congo and Niger remained in the hands of the Africans, and consequently Euro-African relations governed inter-European commercial relations. It is no wonder that the attempt to regulate the subordinate European partners in the trade while ignoring its African rulers, proved futile. When the effect in Africa is considered the paradox of the Conference, which arguably has been thrown out of the window in a European context, returns through the door.

Bismarck and Ferry, Granville and Salisbury, with no serious belief in Central African empire, fobbed off responsibility for carrying out the treaty onto what were in effect chartered companies, whose interests obviously ran counter to free trade; and the more so, when they were saddled with the costs of substantiating spheres of influence before European rivals invaded them. To save their balance sheets, they were forced to join with some African communities against others in proliferating indigenous monopolies over further territories. In this way partition stimulated occupation. The Niger Company for example was already fighting the peoples on the Lower Niger for control of trade. After 1890 the Congo states's expeditions were warring with Arab ivory traders in the north east, with Tipu Tib as an ally, while 'pacifying' the western rubber forests. Harry Johnston, an expert Africanist summed up the result five years after the Conference:

At the time of the Berlin Conference, optimists thought that, by a number of careful provisions in their treaties, they had secured a kind of international neutral territory, in which everybody might trade and evangelise . . . It will soon be a Belgian colony . . . there are tolls here and tolls there. Much of this taxation is necessary . . . a system of government cannot be carried on without money.¹³²

It was easy in retrospect to blame the Conference for licensing monopoly over a much greater range, yet its arrangements made little difference one way or the other to the usual trade restrictions practised in the organization of trade on the African side.

Africans rather than Europeans were ultimately to determine the real meaning of the Berlin agreements. Courcel hinted as much in warning against the 'illusion' of believing that 'the system of freedom of commerce . . . proclaimed by the Conference' could be applied to 'territory where the authority of native Chiefs who are not under the influence of any of the Contracting Powers is actually exercised'. 'It will be

¹³² H. H. Johnston, 'Development of Tropical Africa under British Auspices', *Fortnightly Review*, 48, Nov. 1890, 690.

impossible, at least at first, to prevent certain local failures in detail in the general system.¹³³ This was surely the diplomatic understatement of the proceedings. When most of the area was under African control, the exceptions in detail would clearly be the rule, yet the assembly assumed omnipotence throughout. Governments with long experience of African resistance in the coast trade knew better, but thought best to inflate their influence to strengthen their claims.

A rich variety of African cultures at different stages of development were casually generalized into a 'system'. Formidable hegemonies were classified as primitive tribes; shrewd commercial institutions were mistaken for savage sorceries. The assembly was unaware of the extent to which long distance trade had already commercialized communities in the region. In aspiring to eradicate the internal slave trade, the 'humanitarian conscience' ignored how the increase of 'legitimate trade' required the employment of more and more slaves in production and transport, how arms traffic was connected with the rise of new empires, and how the taste for ivory gee-gaws and doorknobs in European drawing rooms was proliferating in the catching of slaves and shooting of elephants across the continent.¹³⁴ Above all, the Conference glossed over an entire history of how successfully African peoples had defended their control of production and supply hitherto against European take-overs.¹³⁵

Several case studies in this volume show the difficulty of transplanting European free trade into African political economies, without dominion. At Lagos to the west of the lower Niger for instance, the British had intervened in support of some Yoruba states against others since the eighteen forties, in hope of cajoling the hinterland into a free trade zone for Europeans. At first, in return for artillerymen to repel invading Dahoman armies, the chiefs of Abeokuta had welcomed Lagos firms and missionaries, their alliance opening a way through the ring of entrepreneurial powers for British companies to buy palm oil directly from the inland producers. By the sixties however, the Christians had been driven out. All the states had shut their gates to European merchants, not least to save their trading profits from foreign competitors. Access to the internal economy was denied, while Abeokuta and Ibadan, Ijebu-Ode, and the Ekiti confederacy fought over the territory of the former Oyo empire for exclusive control of trade paths and markets. The military plans of Baloguns rather than the enterprise of trade chiefs largely dictated terms for supplying exports. Although Lagos commerce grew in spite of frequent interruptions, without countervailing European military intervention, indigenous power politics were still baffling free trade policy when the Conference met.¹³⁶ Wherever well-organized states opposed open access, more often than not the foreign would-be manipulators found themselves manipulated into serving local African monopolies of trade and power.

In the Niger delta and the Oil Rivers to the east, the quest for open access proved no less difficult, although Africans and Europeans might do business here free of troubles with large states and numberless creeks and lagoons favoured gunboat diplomacy.

¹³³ *Protocols*, no. 6, 22 Dec. 1884, 182.

¹³⁴ See R. Oliver, 'Introduction', and A. E. Atmore, 'Africa on the eve of partition', *Cambridge History of Africa*, vol. 6.

¹³⁵ See J. Lonsdale, 'The European Scramble and Conquest in African History', *ibid.*; M. Crowder (ed.), *West African Resistance: The Military Response to Colonial*

Occupation, London 1971.

¹³⁶ See J. F. Ajayi and M. Crowder, *History of West Africa*, 2 vols., London 1971-4, vol. 2; J. F. Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-91*, London 1965; S. A. Akintoye, *Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland, 1840-93*, London 1971; A. I. Asiwaju, *Western Yorubaland under European Rule, 1889-1945*, London 1976.

After decades of British influence, palm oil had been substituted for slave exports but little advance had been made in loosening the indigenous grip on internal markets. As the Conference was told, 'the trade of the interior passes through the medium of coast tribes who act as middlemen and who, being keenly alive to their interests, are difficult to manage and control'.¹³⁷ These so-called tribes, far from being anthropological museum pieces, were of course sophisticated business communities organized to get the better of foreign traders. A congeries of towns guarded the entrances to the rivers. Associations of African merchant 'Houses' based in Bonny, Benin, Brass, and the Calabars each controlled its segment of the domestic export-import economy through armed canoe fleets, resident buying agents, police, and clan or marriage alliance with the oil producers. So long as the Liverpool firms were content to advance credit to the African Houses and leave them to organize oil supplies from up river, their partnerships worked in imperfect competition to mutual benefit. Europeans provided capital for expanding export production; Africans profited from their hold on supplies, which tilted the foreign exchanges in their favour. In this way, alien resources strengthened indigenous balances of wealth and power.

As soon as Europeans tried to win direct access, however, these partnerships fell to pieces. With the depression of oil prices in world markets during the seventies, cut-throat competition over the share-out of dwindling profits jerked the miniscule politics dividing supply routes into uproar.¹³⁸ Some European firms advanced to compete with African Houses partnered by other firms in internal markets, while Houses invaded each other's preserves more frequently. African and European entrepreneurs alike pursued oligopoly in mercantilist fashion by force of arms. In 1887 Ja Ja of Opobo was to be deported on a gunboat.¹³⁹ The turn of Nana of Ebrohimi was coming.

The Berlin Treaty encouraged local consuls and traders in the British protectorate on the lower Niger to use force more often. Anxious to escape financial liability for carrying the treaty out, Whitehall acquiesced more readily in local actions of dubious legality. Yet two decades of military expeditions and patrols were needed to open up the internal markets of the Delta and Oil Rivers comprehensively for Europeans. Goldie's Niger company had begun the task of 'pacifying' the indigenous merchant Houses on the banks of the main stream from Brass to Idah in the early eighties. They retaliated by burning down many of his depots when his fleet steamed elsewhere.¹⁴⁰ A number of British firms amalgamated in a monopoly on the European side of the trade were hard put to enforce free trade on the African side in the lower Niger, let alone on the powerful Muslim emirates on the middle Niger and the Benue.¹⁴¹ Nevertheless *The Times* reported on 15 October 1884: 'The territory of the Lower Niger is now an English possession, and if the trade is a monopoly of a company of English merchants . . . this is due to no favouring tariffs or exclusive privileges, but to superiority in enterprise, capital, and skill.' Thus on the Niger, as on the Congo,¹⁴² mere influence

¹³⁷ Granville to Malet, 7 Nov. 1884, 'Further Correspondence respecting the West African Conference', C. 4241, 2 (1884).

¹³⁸ K. O. Diké, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-85*, Oxford 1956; O. Ikime, *Niger Delta Rivalry: Itsekiri-Urhobo Relations and the European Presence, 1884-1936*, London 1969; T. C. Weiskel, *French Colonial Rule and the Baule Peoples, 1889-1911*, Oxford 1980; J. C. Anene, *Southern Nigeria in Transition, 1885-1906*, Cambridge 1966.

¹³⁹ S. J. Cooke, *King Ja Ja of the Niger Delta*, Nok 1974.

¹⁴⁰ K. O. Diké, *Trade and Politics*; J. Flint, *Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria*, London 1960.

¹⁴¹ R. A. Adeleye, *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria, 1804-1906*, London 1971; A. M. Fika, *The Kano Civil War and British Over-Rule*, Ibadan 1978.

¹⁴² N. N. Metegue, *L'implantation coloniale au Gabon: résistance d'un peuple, 1839-1920*, Paris 1981; E. Mbokolo,

would obviously not suffice to impose free trade on African merchants and rulers when an open market threatened the basis of their social and political orders. To bring such an innovation into effect against widespread resistance, as Professor Ikime shows, alien officials and traders had to stop 'advising' as consuls and begin insisting as colonial governors.¹⁴³ If the British government had qualms, the French had no doubt of the necessity. In 1881 they had placed their projected commercial advance from the upper Senegal to the upper Niger under military command.¹⁴⁴

African economies, relatively undifferentiated from local social and political affiliations, operated in ways unaccounted for in European free trade doctrine. Palm oil, rubber, or ivory from up country passed through several hands before they were bartered for gin, bolts of cloth, or muskets at European depots on the fringes. On the way, supplies and porters might be organized locally through blood brotherhoods, marital or clan connections, priests of ancestral cults, or more rarely the mercantilist-minded officials of a centralized state.¹⁴⁵ For all these unusual middlemen, the profit made a great difference to their ranking in the local community, as well as their community's capacity to defend itself and dominate its neighbours. In these circumstances, the various social segments in the entrepreneurial chain competed for local monopoly as keenly as any industrial state, while the European intruder scrambled for his share on the back of indigenous rivals. Since the European taxpayer and investor were unready to finance the new international order, the Africans had to pay for the partition.

Whatever their status in European law, these countries were not in fact 'unoccupied' as the Conference supposed. Over most of the partitioned area, the European was either absent or remained a make-weight in local African politics. Curiously, it was not the Europeans but the Africans who were principally scrambling for trade and territorial control at the time. Foreign penetration depended on co-operating with some African communities against others in the indigenous processes of state-making and breaking. Although European supplies and firepower counted for much, access to trade routes depended largely on local African balances of power. Imbroglions between European and African would-be empire-builders were to spread widening scrambles for territorial control in complex patterns of mutual collaboration and resistance, until in one area after another the balance of alien and indigenous power tilted inexorably towards colonial rule.¹⁴⁶ By the opening of the twentieth century, the spheres of influence distributed at Berlin had materialized. The Conference, unwittingly or not, had played its part in rough-hewing the continent's numberless indigenous states and communities into forty-eight centralizing colonial administrations.

Noirs et blancs en Afrique Equatoriale: Les sociétés côtières et la pénétration française 1820-74, Paris 1981; P. Ceulemans, *La question arabe et le Congo, 1883-92*, Brussels 1959; J. Stengers, 'The Congo Free State before 1914' in Gann and Duignan, *Colonialism in Africa*.

¹⁴³ See below.

¹⁴⁴ A. S. Kanya-Forstner, *The Conquest of the Western Sudan: a Study in French Military Imperialism*, Cambridge 1969.

¹⁴⁵ C. Meillassoux (ed.), *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa*, London 1971;

D. Northrup, *Trade Without Rulers: Pre-Colonial Economic Development in South-Eastern Nigeria*, Oxford 1978; J. Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savannah*, Madison 1966; R. Smith, *Warfare and Diplomacy in pre-Colonial West Africa*, London 1976.

¹⁴⁶ See R. E. Robinson, 'Non-European Foundation of European Imperialism', R. Owen and B. Sutcliffe (eds.), *Studies in the Theories of Imperialism*, London 1974; and R. E. Robinson, 'European Expansion and Indigenous Reactions in British West Africa, 1880-1914', in H. Wesseling (ed.), *Expansion and Reaction: Essays in European Expansion and Reactions in Asia and Africa*, Leiden 1981.

An assembly which planned a 'loaded pause' with a view to forestalling a European scramble and putting off the evil day cannot be blamed for the colonial aftermath, but it does reflect on the reasons why its plan failed. Sitting in their Eurocentric world, the plenipotentiaries and delegates by and large were much more concerned with saving territory from protectionist clutches than with staking out future colonies and as they saw it in a European context, free trade in Central Africa required a partition of claims. They had to be settled, as commercial options inland had become entangled in European power politics. The significance of the Conference in Euro-African relations however was not to be determined by the diplomatic process in Europe but by the continuities of African history. Just as the Conference involved trade in Central Africa in the diplomacy of the European Concert, so the Berlin partition involved the traders and consuls more extensively in the complexities of African politics. The fragmented condition of Africa determined that the partition should govern the treaty. Whatever the Conference intended, its free trade zones became economic monopolies, its spheres of influences prepared the way for territorial occupation. None of the claimants could afford to clear the paths for international trade through African states for nothing. Nor could open access be imposed upon them without armed territorial intervention. The idea of disposing of commerce in other peoples' countries as a way of avoiding administrative liability proved unrealistic. It was not the first, nor would it be the last international gathering to mistake the shape of things to come.

The Economist's verdict on the Conference at the time anticipated many of its inevitable results:

The Berlin agreements have set up the International Association as '... a Government of itself possessed of all powers, yet without any army, subjects, or a revenue. It must, in the natural course of things, endeavour to acquire all three, if only to carry out its professed objects, and it is difficult to see how it can succeed without setting Free Trade at defiance. It cannot levy a land tax; it cannot establish monopolies ... and what is it to tax except trade? ... The tendency of such a Company is to expand its operations, to describe invasions as explorations, and to annex under cover of setting up trading stations, and if supported by great capitalists, ... it might become worse than any Protectionist State.'¹⁴⁷

The prediction also held good for the Niger region, whether under military, chartered company, or consular administration.

In conclusion, the Berlin plan, if not exactly a charade, was a figment of Bismarck's inward-looking historicism. His map of Africa was in Europe and there it was projected first on defending the Fatherland's frontiers, and then incidentally on founding an informal maritime empire. Africa was merely a piece in the overall strategy. The question of internationalizing its commerce offered an opportunity of directing the Concert against comparatively minor English interests overseas, without the serious risks involved in confronting them in Egypt. As usual this timing was brilliant. The professional 'honest broker of Europe' could not resist a chance of taking advantage of a Liberal government bogged down on the Nile with its naval supremacy in decline. He could speculate on a good thing in calling a Conference ostensibly over international trade in Africa. A tiny olive branch for France might help keep her divided from England and Russia for the time being, and lessen the risks of Germany being

¹⁴⁷ *The Economist*, 29 Nov. 1884, 1442.

attacked on two fronts. To win an election, the Conference was also designed as the central thrust of a broader drive for German *Lebensraum* in a world of closing colonial frontiers. As Bismarck wrote to Münster on 25 January 1885, 'the Colonial question is already a matter of life and death for reasons of domestic policy . . . the Government's position in the country depends on its success. . . . The smallest corner of New Guinea or West Africa, even if quite worthless in itself, is just now of greater importance to our policy than the whole of Egypt and its future'.

So far as free trade was the purpose of Bismarck's Conference, it defeated its own object. It is open to diplomatic historians to interpret its meaning strictly as a matter of open access to the Congo and Niger, but the Chancellor and the colonial powers had no doubt that the implications were world wide. When first announced in October, the agenda seemed to involve all 'unoccupied territories' in raising the question of effective occupation on coasts, without specifying the extent of hinterland involved. The impression of the Conference as a free-for-all exchange of territorial claims was confirmed when Bismarck invited Britain and France to discuss privately with Germany 'African matters analogous to those to be dealt with by Conference' and promised 'the adhesion of Austria, Russia, Italy, and probably Turkey to any views which we might entertain in common'.¹⁴⁸ Downing Street concluded: 'we are liable to lose [our paramount positions] at any moment. . . . It is uncertain what decisions may be come to at Berlin as to the extent inland of coastal possessions . . . in the presence of the African scramble, we are almost forced into action.' 'It was not [a question of] the acquisition of territory but [of] securing ourselves in a paramount position' in one place after another.¹⁴⁹ More than what the Conference actually did, it was the issues raised in anticipation that precipitated partitions.

Bismarck's challenge drove the British and therefore the French to enlarge their coastal paramountcies into protectorates or spheres of influence over hinterlands, wherever a vital interest was in question. The sub-imperialism of colonists in South Africa and Australasia was also provoked. It is true Germany picked up some territorial claims from demonstrating her new world status at Berlin, but her free trade aim was frustrated in the rivalry her method vastly extended. As a 'loaded pause' for halting the scramble, the Conference proved a fiasco. In the end it was not diplomatic sleight of hand but power to assert pretensions on the spot that decided claims overseas and indigenous resistance that changed the partition of free trade in Berlin into colonial monopoly in Africa. Bismarck's Conference strategy perhaps was too clever by half. He planned to manipulate the politics of Europe by regulating the commercial future of Africa. So many different objectives at home and abroad were not to be gained at a single brilliant stroke. As a result his *Realpolitik* made sense in Europe and nonsense in Africa, and so, looking back to the era of trade without rule in Euro-African relations, the Conference stumbled towards the age of empire.

¹⁴⁸ Malet to Granville, 13 Nov. 1884, FO 84/1814, Africa (Slave Trade) Papers, relating to the Congo and West African Conference, 23 Oct.-15 Nov. 1884.

¹⁴⁹ C. Hill Minute on CO Memo, 10 Nov. 1884, FO 84/1814.

A
European Interests in Africa

2

On the Margins of Empire: The Trade of Western Africa, 1875–1890

COLIN NEWBURY

I

Il faut songer qu'il y a concurrence, que le voisin cherche à faire mieux, et que beaucoup des articles primitifs qui se vendent au poids de l'or sont aujourd'hui dédaignés . . . Il faut acheter à la source, que ce soit en *Angleterre* ou en *Allemagne*: chez le fabricant lui-même.¹

The commercial advice given by Brazza's accountant at the outset of his third and most openly nationalistic expedition to consolidate French advances in the Congo, 1883–5, is a reminder that the trade of Europe with Africa was multilateral in exports and subject to changing demand in the local market. Trade preceded most flags and followed the company house flag in areas of the coast still outside European control. Away from the coast and European bulking centres, commercial exchanges and the distribution of manufactures and primary commodities were handled by relays of middlemen and networks of periodic and long-distance markets and caravans. Indeed, it was one of Brazza's objectives to remedy France's poor competitive position in West African trade by founding posts in the interior and a huge commercial company on the Gabon coast—'espèce de grand magasin du Louvre du Gabon'—which would operate from Libreville to Loango and link up with the African ivory and rubber traders at Ndjole on the Oguwe and at Stanley Pool on the Congo.²

It did not happen. The financial backing for Brazza's schemes was not provided by French banks, and most French, German, and British firms in the Congo region continued to remain on the coast and along the main river artery for nearly two decades, until the French Congo like the Congo Free State inaugurated a policy of investment by territorial concessions and land expropriation.

Nevertheless, the idea that Africa's internal commercial networks could be tapped to increase the trade of coastal bulking centres exerted a powerful hold on the imagination of explorers, geographers, military adventurers, and merchants in the 1870s and 1880s. The reasons lie in the literature of Europe's discovery of African societies in the western interior of the forest and savanna zones stretching from Senegal to Chad and from the Congo to the Zambezi. At its most romantic level this enthusiasm drew on Europe's railway technology from 1879 to channel the productions of the Upper Niger to the lower Senegal and inspired Gallieni to send his lieutenants to Bambuk and

¹ C. Coquery-Vidrovitch (ed.), *Brazza et al prise de possession du Congo*, Paris 1969, p. 41. I am grateful for information supplied by a number of colleagues at the

symposium, especially Dr Gervase Clarence-Smith and Prof. Henk Wesseling.

² *Ibid.*, p. 90.

Timbuktu to bring the caravans south to Bamako and 'drain off . . . all the commerce of the Sahara and the Western Sudan'.³ More usefully, the United African Company and its French rivals established their posts on the lower Niger as far as the Benue confluence and Nupe by 1882. In the same year the German explorer Eduard Flegel made verbal agreements in Adamawa as a basis for German company promotion and later boundary agreements. In the Congo his fellow countrymen Paul Pogge and Hermann Wissman followed the Cokwe trade routes through the Lunda heartland in the wave of prospection sponsored by the Berlin Geographical Society and the International African Association.⁴

Clearly, a great deal of this military, scientific, and commercial effort was assertion of a national interest by company promotion. The Niger and the lower Congo are almost unique in Western Africa as the two avenues to the interior where Europeans did make a successful bid to establish joint stock enterprise before 1885. The more usual pattern of commercial organization before and after the end of the slave trade was to spread the risks of trading along the coast by multiplying bulking points, leaving internal transport to armies of small traders, produce brokers, and their domestic slaves who ferried palm oil and kernels and head-loaded ivory, rubber, kolas, beniseed, and lesser exportable items. Most of the old coast firms established from the 1860s had warehouses in more than one of the European enclaves or treated with Africans for a factory site and access to a landing place. French and German firms east of the Gold Coast followed the same pattern, competing strongly at Lagos and in the Cameroon and Congo ports, but leaving the Delta and Niger to the British before 1882.⁵

Since the pioneer studies of diplomatic partition in the 1880s were written by S. E. Crowe and W. L. Langer, West African historiography has drawn more heavily on the literature of market systems and regional trade, stressing the interaction, not the duality, of European commercial investment and indigenous production beyond the level of 'subsistence-oriented trade'.⁶ There has been more emphasis, too, on the influence of the European export sector, reflected in changing volumes and prices, than on the older contrast between the export of manpower and the humanitarian encouragement of 'legitimate trade'.⁷ There are still problems in this shift of emphasis away from metropolitan diplomacy to regional history, not least in the historical explanation for linkages between local or endogenous factors encouraging expansion into the interior, compared with metropolitan evaluation of a marginal set of produce markets. It is still not clear just how commercial pressure groups influenced

³ Instructions to Martin and Caron, 1886, in *Bulletin de la Société Commerciale de Paris*, 10 (1887-8), p. 291; see, too, A. S. Kanya-Forstner, *The Conquest of the Western Sudan: A Study of French Military Imperialism*, Cambridge 1969, pp. 151-2.

⁴ Public Record Office, London. Granville Papers 30/29/270, Foreign Office Confidential Print (FOCP henceforth) 5023; E. Bustin, *Lunda under Belgian Rule*, Cambridge Mass. 1975, ch. 2.

⁵ Our knowledge of the distribution of European firms derives mainly from consular reports; much can be learned, too, from shipping manifests, and some of these for Liverpool and Hamburg were printed by the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce in its analysis of West African trade in 1883. Handelskammer Hamburg

84/A/1/3; and Staatsarchiv, Hamburg, CL. vi. 15/6/4, report to the 'Deputation für Handel und Schiffahrt', 6 July 1883.

⁶ R. Gray, D. Birmingham (eds.), *Pre-Colonial African Trade: Essays on Trade in Central and Eastern Africa before 1900*, Oxford 1970, p. 3; and for a different typology, J. Vansina, 'Long-Distance Trade Routes in Central Africa', in *Journal of African History*, 3 (1962), pp. 375-90; and the introduction to C. Meillassoux (ed.), *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa*, Oxford 1971, pp. 3-49.

⁷ A. G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa*, London 1973, chs. 3, 4; P. Duignan, L. H. Gann (eds.), *Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960*, 5 vols, Cambridge 1969-75, vol. 4: *The Economics of Colonialism*, Cambridge 1975.

international negotiations and metropolitan or local initiatives in staking out political and economic claims to the African interior, or what changes in Europe's commerce with Western Africa gave rise to this new state of affairs in European and African relations in the 1880s, before more dramatic partition and conquest in the 1890s.

At the risk of doing injustice to a growing literature, there would seem to be two main approaches which have yielded results so far. The work of Roger Anstey illuminated the British merchants' biggest success in scotching the Anglo-Portuguese treaty and assisting in promoting Leopold's plans for the Congo.⁸ Others, notably H. Washausen and B. M. Ratcliffe, have explored the connections between mercantile circles and imperial policy, without, however, establishing such clear and positive links in the process of European expansion in German or British West Africa.⁹ Detailed analysis of chamber of commerce records indicates that merchants were consulted, frequently petitioned, and held views about African markets, but were not necessarily instrumental in forcing decisions about partition.¹⁰ There were, too, divisions between representatives of metropolitan manufacturing interests with wider markets than Africa and specialized exporters, commission houses, and brokers familiar with the market for vegetable oil, ivory, or rubber. Metropolitan firms with branches in Africa and the shipping companies could make an informed case for government support, but they were not very numerous and could only appeal to the wider mercantile, banking, and industrial community on general grounds of 'free trade', 'national manufactures', and the dangers of foreign competition. One branch of the merchant pressure group approach, particularly relevant to changing British official attitudes, has been investigation of the threat to liberal free trade practices from the application of tariffs and restrictions on shipping in the administrative enclaves.¹¹ What was primarily a need to raise revenue and a factor exacerbating relations between merchants and officials in foreign or, indeed, in their own territories, can be raised to the level of 'protectionist imperialism', just as protectorate treaties can be exaggerated into the concept of 'jurisdictional imperialism'.¹² What were means are taken to be ends.

A second and more subtle approach is to follow the advice of R. E. Robinson and J. Gallagher who perceived that 'the crucial changes that set all working took place in Africa itself' (though not necessarily in Egypt as the *fons et origo*).¹³ A. G. Hopkins viewed the origins of West African imperial advances both as a result of an internal 'crisis of adaptation' in the Yoruba hinterland during the transition from slave to agricultural exports, and as a short-term recession in the coastal markets which

⁸ R. T. Anstey, *Britain and the Congo in the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford 1962, chs. 4, 6, 7.

⁹ B. M. Ratcliffe, 'Commerce and Empire: Manchester Merchants and West Africa, 1873-1895', in *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 7 (1979), pp. 293-320; and (less certainly) 'The Economics of the Partition of Africa: Methods and Recent Research Trends', in *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 15 (1981), pp. 3-31; H. Washausen, 'Hamburg und die Kolonialpolitik des Deutschen Reiches 1880-1890', in *Veröffentlichungen des Vereins für Hamburgische Geschichte*, 23 (1968), pp. 67-76.

¹⁰ It would seem from Bordeaux and Marseilles chamber of commerce records that the main concern of those bodies was with city and regional development in France, unless an overseas merchant was personally

represented on their administrative councils.

¹¹ C. W. Newbury, 'The Tariff Factor in Anglo-French West African Partition', in R. Gifford, R. Louis (eds.), *France and Britain in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule*, New Haven 1971, pp. 221-59.

¹² A. D. Nzemeke, *British Imperialism and African Response: The Niger Valley, 1851-1905*, Paderborn 1982, pp. 217-67; W. Ross Johnston, *Sovereignty and Protection: A Study of British Jurisdictional Imperialism in the late Nineteenth Century*, Durham NC, 1973, chs. 5, 6.

¹³ R. E. Robinson, J. Gallagher, 'The Partition of Africa', in *The New Cambridge Modern History*, 14 vols., Cambridge 1957-70, vol. 11, ed. F. H. Hinsley: *Material Progress and World-Wide Problems, 1870-1898*, Cambridge 1962, pp. 593-641, p. 594.

narrowed profit margins and encouraged both European and African traders to seek remedies from local administrators. It was a short step from stipends to chiefs, treaties, and travelling commissioners to the use of force in the early 1890s. Other historians, particularly Nigerians, have developed this theme; and it may well be that the 'local crisis' and imperial response fits West African cases best in the 1880s and 1890s.¹⁴ The method has the advantage, moreover, of stressing the flexibility of indigenous and foreign traders' reactions to disruption of interior supply lines; and it has interesting parallels with more recent reappraisals of local 'disturbances' in Cape frontier history and intrusive German rivalry, 1877-84, as an explanation for the partition of Southern Africa.¹⁵ Its final advantage is that a focus on market dynamics sets local politics firmly into the framework of economic geographers' useful perceptions of 'port gateways' and West Africa's interregional systems for moving men and goods which were essential to bulking and transport on the coast.¹⁶ The most thorough analysis of West African partition to date, therefore, is on solid ground in deflating some of the high-flown language of European 'prestige' and 'nationalist feeling' and concentrating on the 'crisis' of 1884-5 which was 'largely about African problems in the first place'.¹⁷

But what exactly was the nature of the 'crisis' in economic terms; and how was it perceived by contemporaries? To concentrate on long-term or short-term effects of European trade in West Africa reveals two essential features of the region's external exchanges which would be stressed by quite different historical schools. One which is akin to 'dependency' theory would recognize that the volume and price of exports were determined very largely by European demand. This proposition can be tested quite simply by the conformity in the cyclical movements of imported values into the United Kingdom, or other industrial countries, of staples of different geographical origins. For example, palm oil sent to the wholesale markets of Liverpool or Marseilles from all ports of Western Africa, Egypt, India, and Ceylon encountered equal price falls in the 1870s and 1880s with little margin for quality differences.¹⁸ It followed that the volume of European exports to Western Africa and some currency exports were made to pay for the level of metropolitan consumption, and there were levels below which no merchant or broker would risk speculative investment in West African commodities. It did not follow (*pace* the dependency theorists) that peasant producers within the domestic economies of West African societies relied on imported manufactures, or even foodstuffs, to such an extent that they could not forego this barter trade when its terms were increasingly unfavourable. The reason for this room for manoeuvre, still available in the 1880s, was the existence of periodic and interregional trade in cloths, ironware, livestock, grains, and other necessities, which is the starting point for much of the

¹⁴ Hopkins, *Economic History*; and his 'Economic Imperialism in West Africa: Lagos 1880-92', in *The Economic History Review*, 21 (1968), pp. 580-606; W. I. Ofonagoro, *Trade and Imperialism in Southern Nigeria 1881-1929*, New York 1979, Introduction and chs. 1, 2.

¹⁵ S. A. Akintoye, 'The Ondo Road Eastwards of Lagos, c.1870-95', in *The Journal of African History*, 10 (1969), pp. 581-98; D. M. Schreuder, *The Scramble for Southern Africa, 1877-1895*, Cambridge 1980, pp. 96-110, ch. 3.

¹⁶ A. M. Howard, 'The Relevance of Spatial Analysis for African Economic History: The Sierra Leone-Guinea System', in *The Journal of African History*, 18 (1976),

pp. 365-88; P. E. Lovejoy, 'Interregional Monetary Flows in the Pre-colonial Trade of Nigeria', in *The Journal of African History*, 15 (1974), pp. 563-85.

¹⁷ J. D. Hargreaves, *West Africa Partitioned*, 2 vols., London 1974-85, vol. 1: *The Loaded Pause 1885-1889*, p. 30 and ch. 1.

¹⁸ Brokerage of oils of multiple origins is discussed in Marseilles' annual *Compte-rendu de la situation commerciale et industrielle de la circonscription de Marseille, 1877-1882, 1883-1888*, Marseilles 1889; see too the *Chamber of Commerce Journal* (London) for the 1880s, and the invaluable annual review of all commodity prices in *The Economist* for the 1870s and 1880s.

historical study of pre-colonial Africa. There are reservations to be made about the volume of this internal trade and its supplementation by trans-Saharan commerce. But it would be recognized that from Senegal to the Congo European imports were distributed through lengthy, slow-moving, largely autonomous networks which could bypass areas of political instability and connect the coast to the interior. Certain items such as arms and powder could not be supplied within the domestic economies of the forest and the savannah. But trade in exported staples never reached such a low ebb in the nineteenth century to put a stop to the arms trade. Furthermore, with the exception of cultivated groundnuts, which entailed considerable reorganization of land-use and labour, most staple exports were either a by-product of the domestic economy or variants of a hunter-gatherer exploitation of indigenous resources. The basis of much of the export trade was *Raubwirtschaft*, before the advent of cocoa and cotton on a large scale in the 1890s.

If these two points are kept in mind, then the position of merchants and middlemen in conditions of falling prices becomes easier to understand. Extension of credit, depreciating currencies, and adulteration of goods were only additional difficulties in a produce and merchandise trade which required a large outlay of working capital and a lengthy seasonal turnover, before a return on investment. The 'crisis' in much of the markets of Western Africa stemmed from a structural problem in the organization of commerce and the absence of specialized banking and other services which import-export firms had to supply. They were generalists in a specialized commodity market with good steamship facilities and vulnerable and isolated factories spread along the coast, depending on a host of African brokers if they could not pay their own agents. If 'dependency' existed in Europe's relations with Western Africa, then it lay in the condition of the partnerships, single traders, and small, limited companies, squeezed between the commission and indent houses of Liverpool, Marseilles, or Hamburg, and internal suppliers who had few means of increasing volume except by diverting labour from the domestic economy.¹⁹ The extent to which merchants, shippers, and local traders appreciated the source of their difficulties or could persuade governments to support them derived from their experience of both movements in the commodity markets and internal disruptions in Western Africa in highly competitive conditions. Some restructured their businesses; others did not and went to the wall.

This 'squeeze' on profitability, moreover, was used by the National African Company as an additional argument for incorporation in July 1886 with a royal charter. Until 1885 heavy expenditure in a trade war against rival French companies and a fall in commodity prices (it was later argued) resulted in a 'commercial and political crisis' which turned profits into losses on the balance sheet. Conferment of an administrative monopoly by charter enabled the company to close posts, cut African staff, and reduce barter prices which had been raised to ruin the French. Thus the Royal Niger Company gained in one step a *de facto* partition and a sphere of monopoly interest which it attributed to 'an unforeseen combination' of market factors and international rivalry.²⁰ How far can this explanation be applied to other aspects of consular and diplomatic intervention in the 1880s?

¹⁹ This does not detract from the value of an eventual 'vent-for-surplus' explanation of commercial growth under improved conditions of infrastructure and/or because of tax and labour incentives. See H. Mynt, *The*

Economics of the Developing Countries, London 1975.

²⁰ Rhodes House Library, Oxford, MSS. Afr. 85, 'Unofficial. The Royal Niger Company. Concise History by the Deputy-Governor', (London) 20 May 1887.

II

The region of European trade with Western Africa in the late nineteenth century was broader and deeper than the conventional division into 'West' and 'Equatorial' Africa. Before the academic 'partition' which followed colonial partition, an older convention stressed the broad unity of the forest and savannah. Paul-Constantin Meyer in 1897 laid down some useful sub-regional divisions which have been followed more recently by economic geographers. The outlets for sea-borne trade to Europe lay along axes which connected with four major zones of internal, diffused trade which, in turn, were linked with the northern axes of the trans-Saharan trade routes, in decline after 1880.²¹ The two which concern us here ran either through Hausaland, Yoruba, and the lower Niger, or connected the markets of Adamawa through the Cameroon grassfields with the Sanaga river and the Sangha and Ubangi routes to the Congo and Gabon.

Similarly, the concept of 'Western Africa' acknowledged the spread of merchant interests from the Gambia to the Guano islands off South West Africa. Until the pattern of annexations imposed a reclassification, British direct trade was divided between British settlements, and the rest of the coast 'not particularly designated'. One economic historian has equated this undesignated trade with that of the Niger Delta.²² But the Customs records from 1891 do not support this proposition, though it is likely a large percentage of quantities and values under 'Western Coast n.p.d.' derived from trade with the Delta and Congo ports—as much as 60 per cent of British direct trade with Western Africa n.p.d., but not all.²³

Any assessment of the long-term and cyclical trends in Europe's trade with Western Africa in the period before partition, then, has to take into account that the statistical record was only a portion of a much larger movement of goods by diffused trade; and, secondly, that the international character of coastal commerce precludes any easy quantification by 'colonies' or trading states. There were some brave attempts by theorists of empire in the early 1880s to demonstrate the 'place' of 'national' trade in

²¹ P. Constantin-Meyer, *Erforschungsgeschichte und Staatenbildung des West Sudan mit Berücksichtigung seiner historischen, ethnologischen und wirtschaftlichen Verhältnisse*, Gotha 1897; Howard, 'The Relevance of Spatial Analysis', pp. 365–88; C. W. Newbury, 'Trade and Reciprocity in Nineteenth Century West African Kingdoms', in 'States and Kingdoms in West Africa in the Nineteenth Century', Symposium, African Studies Center, University of California at Los Angeles, 1969.

²² P. Panning, 'Some Export Statistics for Nigeria, 1880–1905', in *The Nigerian Journal of Economics and Social Studies*, 9 (1967), pp. 229–34. The false assumption is that before 1891 'the exports of the eastern Delta represent virtually all of the quantities listed from "West Africa, not Particularly Designated"'. The calculation of Warri, Benin, and Niger oil and kernel exports through Forcados which this article illuminatingly presents is not affected; but the 'total exports of the Delta from Benin to Calabar' for palm oil and kernels are inflated by the inclusion of *other* n.p.d. to the eastern Delta ports (Brass, New Calabar, Bonny, Old Calabar). This is why the 'total' for 1891 in Table 2.1 does not square with the total

for Lagos and the Southern Nigerian Protectorate.

²³ This can be tested by comparing the Customs import and export statistics for 1890 and 1891, when the Congo Free State and the Niger Coast Protectorate were included as separate items for the first time. These ports accounted for a total of £2,058,595 British direct trade with West Africa—some 5.2 per cent of the Congo and 54 per cent for the Protectorate (that is all the Delta ports to Rio del Rey). The French Congo is probably not added to 'French Possessions' till 1895; and German possessions were not listed separately until 1897, Liberia 1897. C. W. Newbury, *British Policy towards West Africa: Select Documents 1875–1914*, Oxford 1971, Tables 3 and 4. Extrapolation of percentages for earlier British direct trade n.p.d. yields £110,000 for British Congo trade and £1,143,000 for all the Delta ports in 1885 (assuming the same proportions for the 1880s). Some earlier Portuguese trade was, alas, classified under Portuguese ports in the Free Trade zone from 1886. How much we do not know, though there is a notable increase in British trade with Portuguese possessions by some £250,000 in 1887, particularly in direct exports.

league tables of exchanges with 'West Africa'.²⁴ But single years are not very conclusive. Annual values from British, French, German, Portuguese, and some American sources indicate that total external values by sea-borne trade with Western Africa began to level off, after a long upward trend from the early 1860s, in about 1884, and went through a short cyclical depression until recovery in 1888 and 1889. Until this depression in the late 1880s, the value of exchanges roughly doubled in the twenty years 1865-85 to about £8.5 million; and after the depression they increased in 1890 to at least £10 million, before a very rapid expansion of external trade values in the 1890s.²⁵ In the absence of any consolidated statistics of Europe's African trade this calculation must be regarded as tentative and probably a slight underestimate. The general and cyclical trends can be illustrated from British direct trade (Table 2.1) and the short-term cycle from the total trade of British West African colonies which had a very large non-British component (Fig. 2.1).

If the index of United Kingdom trade is based in the late 1850s (from the date when declared invoice values became available), it is evident that the growth of exchanges had begun to slow down by the late 1870s and decelerated for a few years in the late

TABLE 2.1. *Total Trade of the United Kingdom with Western Africa:*
Quinquennial Averages (£000s)

Date	UK imports		UK exports		Total values index	% ratio exports/imports
	value	index	value	index		
1856-60	1,866	100	1,354	100	100	72
1861-65	1,675	89	1,378	101	95	82
1866-70	2,150	115	1,722	127	120	80
1871-75	2,475	132	2,088	154	141	84
1876-80	2,292	123	2,171	160	139	94
1881-85	2,343	125	2,535	187	152	108
1886-90	1,951	104	2,275	168	131	116
1891-95	2,415	129	2,838	209	163	117

Source: PRO Customs 8 and 4; Customs and Excise Library,
Trade and Navigation of the United Kingdom: Annual Accounts, 1853-1914.

²⁴ See the 'totals' in the *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung*, 1 (1884), p. 194 for Lagos and national exports to West Africa 1881-2 which give a total of some £5.4 million, predominantly British (40 per cent); Germany (35 per cent); Netherlands (9.6 per cent); the United States, France, Portugal, and Belgium (all under 6 per cent).

²⁵ Sources for this calculation are listed in C. Newbury, 'Trade and Authority in West Africa from 1850 to 1880', in Gann and Duignan, *Colonialism in Africa*, vol. 1: *The History and Politics of Colonialism, 1870-1914*, Cambridge 1969, pp. 66-99, p. 77 n. 2. These are supplemented by the *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich 1880-1914*, and sources listed in W. O. Henderson, 'Germany's Trade with her Colonies, 1884-1914', in *Economic History Review*, 9 (1938-9), pp. 1-16; and W. G. Clarence-Smith, 'Portuguese Trade with Africa in the

19th Century: An Economic Imperialism with an Appendix on the Trade of Angola', Bonn Symposium on the 'Quantification and Structure of the Import and Export and Long Distance Trade in Africa in the 19th Century', St Augustin, Bonn, 1983. My totals for the 1880s may well be a slight underestimate, as I have no totals for Dutch direct trade, except those in H. Obdeijn, 'The New African Trading-Company and the Struggle for Import Duties in the Congo Free State 1886-1894' (unpublished paper), a reference I owe to Dr Clarence-Smith. The statistics show a predominance of Congo exports to Holland from 1888 at a level of about £250,000. For underestimates based only on trade with colonies, B. R. Mitchell, *International Historical Statistics Africa and Asia*, London 1982, Tables F 1-3.

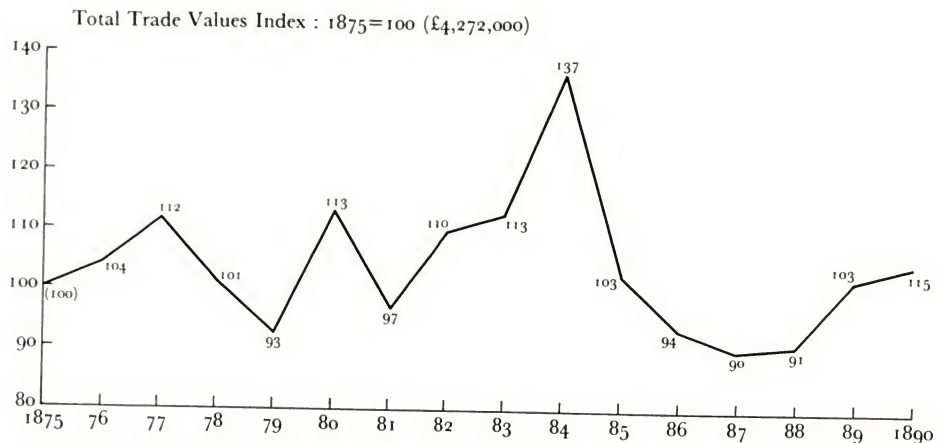


FIG. 2.1. United Kingdom Direct Trade with Western Africa: 1875-1890

Sources: PRO, Customs 4/70-85, 'Imports into the United Kingdom of Tropical Manufactures and Produce from Western Africa'. For export values of United Kingdom manufactures and colonial and foreign manufactures, Newbury, *British Policy towards West Africa*, vol. 2, table III; Customs 8.

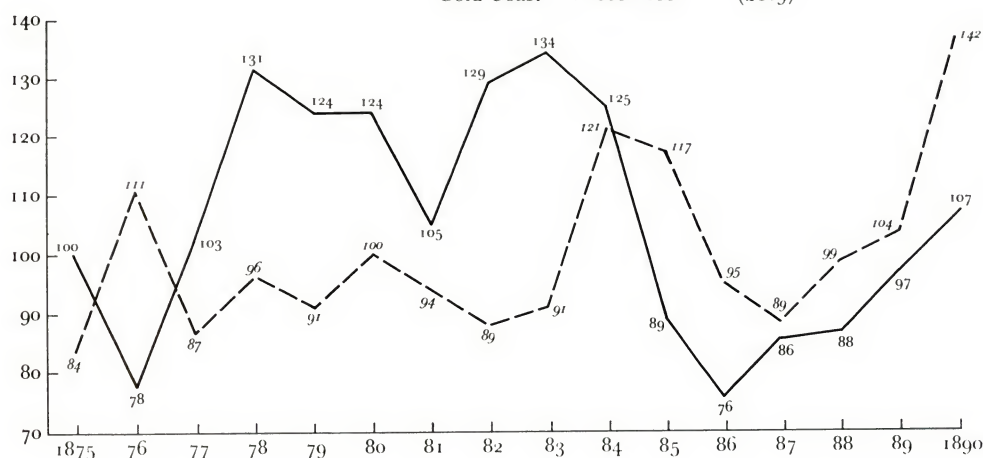
1880s. The British share of trade with the region declined to about half of Europe's traded values of £8 to £10 million, but increased relatively in British possessions. On the other hand, British trade with Portuguese possessions south of the River Loge in Angola grew by 63 per cent in value, 1882-90, to just over £600,000 annually, because of large imports of British hardware, machinery, and coals for bunkering. The same factor—government purchases and investment in steam communication—possibly helps explain the changing ratio of United Kingdom export to import values from the 1850s to the 1890s, in addition to higher barter prices for some European merchandise staples against exports of African staples. There is also a large percentage increase in the imports and exports of specie for British territories by some 300 per cent, 1875-90, with exports of coin predominating during the trade recession of the late 1880s to pay for imported goods.²⁶ Other British exports through foreign ports to Africa cannot be estimated. British exports of 'foreign' manufactures remained small at about 11 or 12 per cent of total export values.

Seen against long-term trends the trade 'recession' of the late 1880s is evident as a sharp fall of about 20 per cent in traded values with a quick recovery. It is confirmed by the profiles of total trade values for the Gambia and Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast and Lagos combined with British trade to undesignated ports, 1875-90 (Fig. 2.2). The well-understood connection with the fall in commodity prices for major staples is also clear in the movement in series between Manchester and Liverpool price indexes for palm oil and palm kernels and the export index for Lagos and undesignated ports (mainly Delta to the Congo). The different profile of the index for the Gambia and Sierra Leone is probably because prices for groundnuts, rubber, ivory, and gum arabic

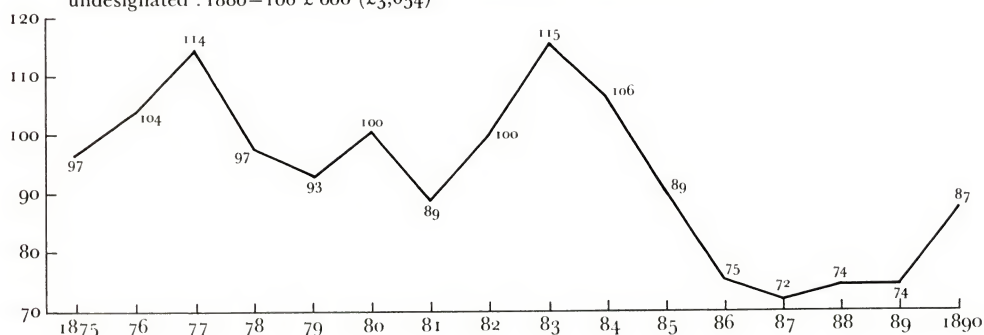
²⁶ For the monetization of commerce, see A. G. Hopkins, 'The Currency Revolution in South-West Nigeria in the Late Nineteenth Century', in *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 3 (1966), pp. 471-83. Sir

Samuel Rowe in comments on Sierra Leone trade noted that 'when produce is plentiful specie is not remitted to Europe'. Memorandum, 29 Apr. 1896, in Newbury, *British Policy*, vol. 2, p. 436.

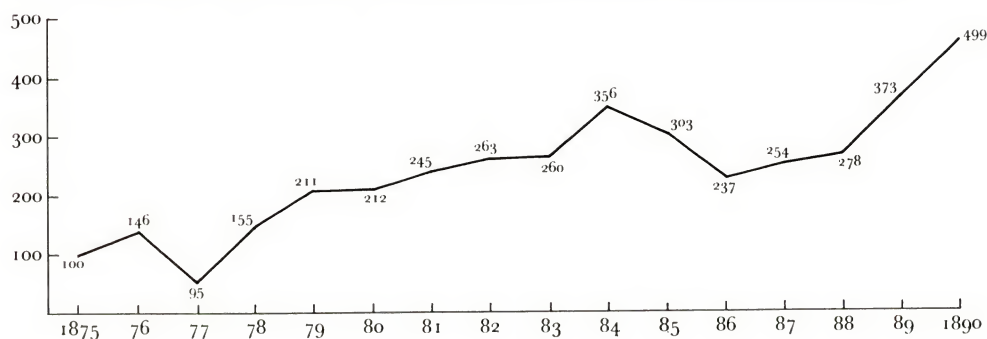
Total Trade Values Index Gambia and Sierra Leone —: 1875=100 £'000 (£966)
Gold Coast — —: 1880=100 (£819)



Total Trade Values Index Lagos and United Kingdom Western Africa
undesignated : 1880=100 £'000 (£3,654)



Values Index Imports and Exports of Specie British West Africa : 1875=100 £'000 (£157.9)



^a Mainly with ports from the Niger Delta to the Congo

FIG. 2.2. Total Trade Values: British Possessions in West Africa, 1875-1890

Sources: PRO Customs 8 and 4; Newbury, *British Policy towards West Africa*, vol. 2, Appendix, tables III, IV, V.

held up better in the 1880s as recession approached than the value of exports from the Oil Rivers, and recovered sooner.²⁷ There is also little sign of recession in Hamburg's imports (Fig. 2.3).

It is also likely that merchants and African traders made a considerable effort to compensate for falling prices by increasing quantities of the palm oil and kernels staples throughout the 1880s (Fig. 2.4). This, in turn, helps to explain the rise in imported merchandise for barter, though it is clear from the Gold Coast and Lagos *Blue Books* there was a real fall in locally traded prices for the two staples over the decade. One trading zone which was more isolated from interior markets for alternative exports was the Eastern Delta from Brass to New and Old Calabar ports. It is likely they bore the brunt of the very serious decline from 37,000 tons of oil exported to the United Kingdom in 1875 from undesignated ports to only 16,500 tons by 1890. Palm kernels, on the other hand, increased by 100 per cent from the undesignated ports, 1875-84, before also declining in quantity. This suggests, too, that the Delta and probably the Congo were the source of a major shift towards kernel processing by domestic labour in the period of falling oil prices.

A final point on exports is to note that rubber and ivory were important exceptions to the trends in other commodity prices. Both of these staples increased their percentage share of traded values between the undesignated ports and the United Kingdom from 10 per cent in 1875 to 44 per cent by 1890. Rubber enjoyed a minor boom both in value and quantity throughout the 1880s, and ivory remained fairly steady in price and quantity from 1878, as some 150 tons annually were exported from the Niger interior, Senegambia, the Gold Coast, Cameroon, the Congo, and lesser ports to the south (Fig. 2.5). From 1891, when reclassification in the records made identification of sources possible, ivory was clearly the major British import by value from the Congo Free State, followed by palm oil, rubber, and coffee, though none of this amounted to much more than £12,500, after Portuguese expansion into Congo ports north of Ambriz. The fact, too, that the Congo supplied so little rubber at that date to the United Kingdom runs counter to the remarkable and expanded imports of *Funtumia* and *Landolphia* from the rest of the coast by 400 per cent in traded quantities, 1875-90, particularly from the Gold Coast and Portuguese Angola. By 1890, the traded value of British rubber imports from Western Africa at £623,617 accounted for 20 per cent of British staple imports from the region.²⁸ No other commodity illustrates so well the international interchangeability in supplies, when British brokers turned away from high-priced *Para* rubber to West African sources to satisfy a rising demand which could not be met by India and Ceylon.²⁹ In the context of Western Africa's sea-borne trade, then, it was rubber, ivory, some cotton, mahogany, cocoa, coffee, pepper, and gum arabic and lesser items which helped redress the slide in vegetable oil values in the 1880s. Value at £1.2 million annually by the end of the decade, British imports of oil and kernels were still far from negligible. But they represented only 55 to 60 per cent of British imports from the region, compared with over 70 per cent in the 1870s.

²⁷ Hargreaves, *Prelude*, Table 4. For Hamburg imports, see Fig. 2.3, below.

²⁸ Public Record Office, Customs 4/85; R. Dumett, 'The Rubber Trade of the Gold Coast and Asante in the

Nineteenth Century. African Innovation and Market Responsiveness', in *The Journal of African History*, 7 (1971), pp. 79-101.

²⁹ Dumett, 'The Rubber Trade', p. 81.

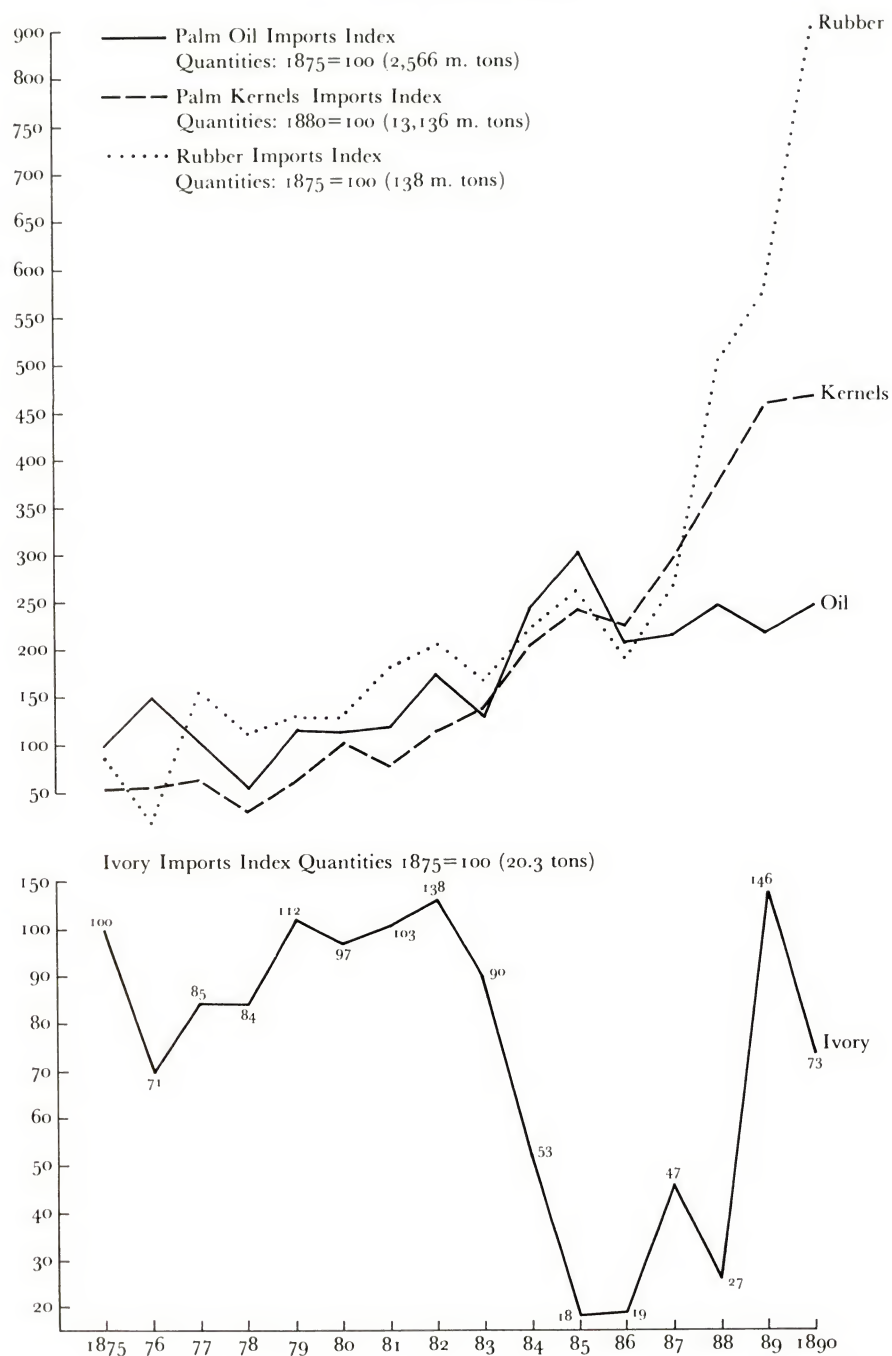


FIG. 2.3. Hamburg Direct Imports from Western Africa, 1875-1890

Source: Tabellarische Übersichten. Staatsarchiv Hamburg: Zoll- und Akzisewesen.

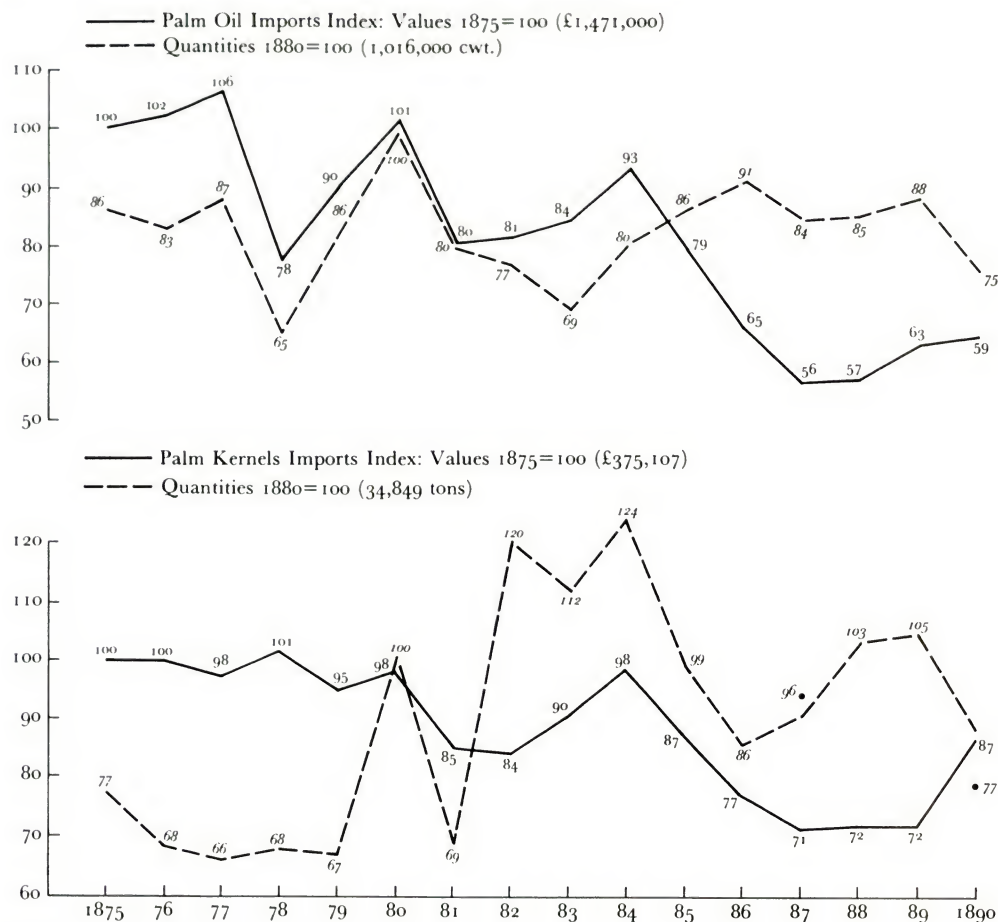


FIG. 2.4. United Kingdom Direct Trade with Western Africa, 1875-1890: Palm Oil and Palm Kernels

Sources: PRO, Customs 4/70-85, 'Imports into the United Kingdom of Tropical Manufactures and Produce from Western Africa'. Palm kernels imports include unspecified quantities of groundnuts from some sources. For export values of United Kingdom manufactures and colonial and foreign manufactures, Newbury, *British Policy towards West Africa*, vol. 2, table III; Customs 8.

So far as British exports were concerned the long-term trend in the index of Table 2.1 shows no 'crisis' at all, apart from a fall of some 17 per cent in the 1886-90 quinquennium. With few exceptions much greater quantities of cotton piece goods, salt, iron ammunition and military stores, machinery (especially steam engines), coal and fuels, woollen manufactures, and brass manufactures to certain ports were being handled by shipping lines in the 1880s. Values rose at a higher rate than imports of tropical staples from the region, as a result of some colonial government spending, merchant investment in lighters, construction of stores and warehouses, and ancillary steam navigation for transshipments along the coastal waterways, lagoons, and the few

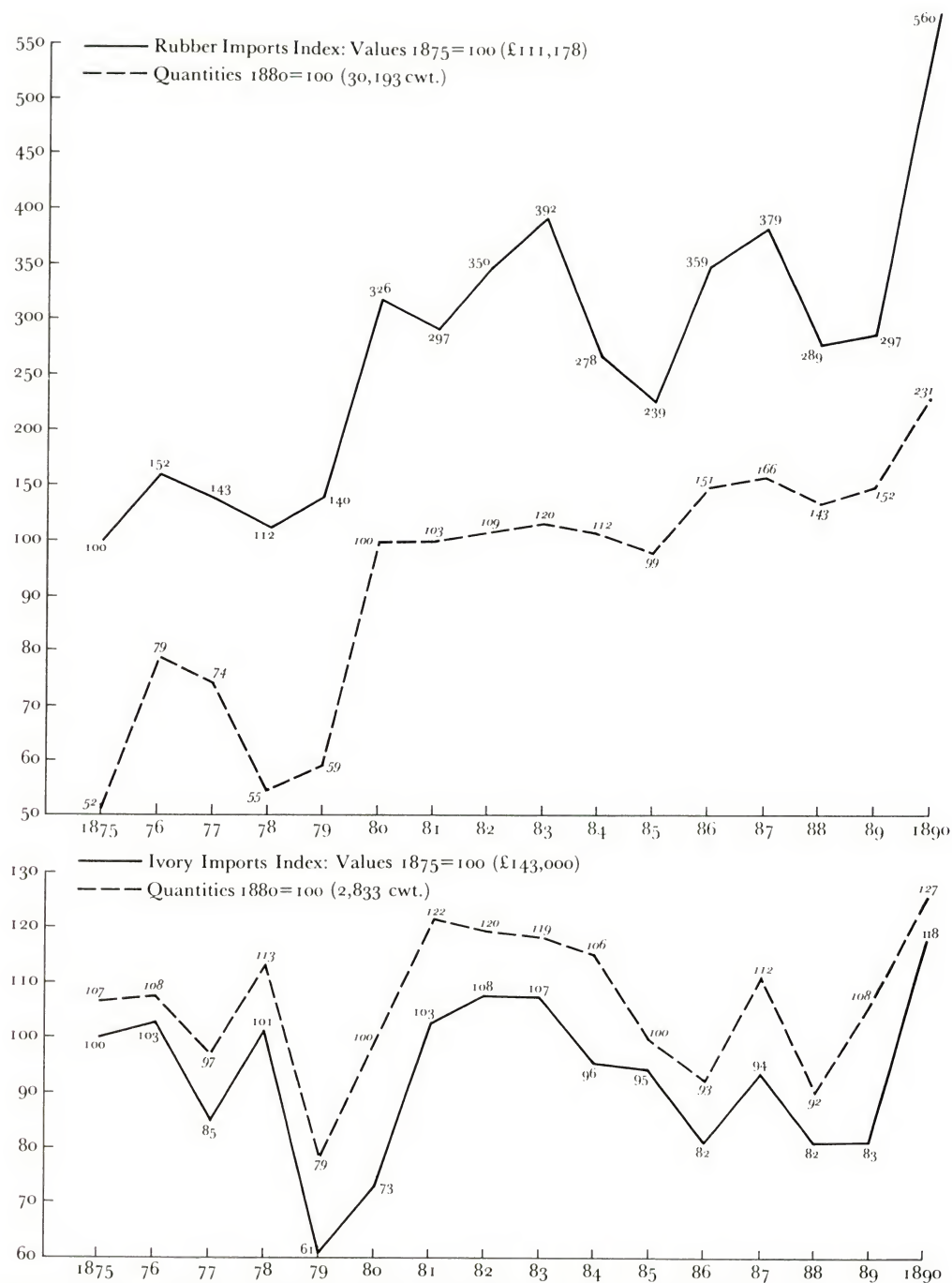


FIG. 2.5. United Kingdom Direct Trade with Western Africa, 1875-1890: Rubber and Ivory

Sources: PRO, Customs 4/70-85, 'Imports into United Kingdom of Tropical Manufactures and Produce from Western Africa'. For export values of United Kingdom manufactures and colonial and foreign manufactures, Newbury, *British Policy towards West Africa*, vol. 2, table III; Customs 8.

river arteries to the interior. Just how much of this rise in exports to West Africa, compared with imports, is due to the expansion of elementary services in British and foreign enclaves is difficult to calculate, but items such as railway waggons and trucks, 'mill works', cement, wrought iron begin to appear in the customs records in the 1880s, joined by cycles in the 1890s. For that reason a wholesale price index to determine the barter terms of trade is not really possible from metropolitan customs records, but some indication of changes in prices and quantities for major exports ranked by value in annual returns can be made to show long-term trends: (Table 2.2).

TABLE 2.2. *British Exports to Western Africa: Prices and Quantities Index*^a

Date	Cotton piece goods		Hardware		Iron		Salt		Coals & fuels		British & Irish spirits	
	P	Q	P	Q	P	Q	P	Q	P	Q	P	Q ^b
1850 ^c	136	38	n.d.	n.a.	88	220	175	74	163	70	125	
1860	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	
1880	84	172	66	156	131	372	115	148	86	1146	69	
1885	75	174	91	98	163	450	133	158	95	1736	58	
1890	76	134	82	45	183	425	200	156	103	3095	55	

^a P = Price Index per exported unit (1860 = 100); Q = Quantity Index of total exported units. Cotton goods were recorded in yards, iron and salt in tons, hardware in cwts., spirits in gallons, and coals and fuels in tons.

^b Record incomplete.

^c Official values only.

Source: PRO Customs 8.

The major British export staple, cotton goods, fell in price per yard by 25 per cent and increased in quantity to some 70 to 80 million yards annually (with a peak year of 106 million yards of prints and calicoes in 1883!). By the late 1890s the quantity increased to 260 over the base year of 1860. Hardware and the lesser item, British and Irish spirits, also fell in price, 1860-90.³⁰ The important staples iron (wrought and unwrought) and imported salt rose significantly in price, while coals and fuels remained steady to the benefit of shipping companies and helped their carrying trade by increasing enormously in quantities sent to the coast. Arms and powder also increased slightly in value 1880-3, but an index is not possible because of classification under 'arms and munitions'.

Looked at in the longer perspective of Western Africa's sea-borne exchanges, the much greater volume of British exports in most staples (except hardware) looks like an effort to maximize turnover for expanded quantities of tropical staples, plus some investment in infrastructure in the coastal enclaves, at a period of falling prices in vegetable oil after the 1850s. None of the price indexes fell quite as much as oil and kernels in Europe, and some staples rose, as, indeed, did the European price for rubber. The evidence lends support to the argument that the barter terms of trade

³⁰ Some of the fall in hardware quantities after 1885 may be because of classification changes in the customs records.

probably moved against primary producers in the third quarter of the nineteenth century and income terms were not helped by falling quantities of the oil, kernels, and groundnuts staples in the 1880s.³¹ It is also possible that not all of this deterioration could be passed on to producers by merchants and middlemen in terms of traded quantities. Unless interior markets were monetized (and many were not in the forest belt), producers may have resisted attempts to reduce the quantities of series of traded goods (in terms of 'longs', 'bars', or whatever other unit was employed). As one Congo trader noted in 1884: 'If the negative has been in the habit of giving 5 lbs of rubber for a gun costing 6s 8d, it is not at all likely that he will give 10 lbs of rubber for it simply because the merchant has paid the Portuguese government another 6s 8d duty upon it.'³² The same argument apply to quantities traded at reduced value on the coast and in Europe. In view of the large differential between middlemen's and brokers' prices for rubber at Cape Coast, compared with returns to producers, and the widespread use of credit in all coastal markets to finance middlemen, it is not certain there was an automatic response in values per unit of produce all the way to the production end of the chain. Indeed, in view of the producers' unwillingness or inability to increase traded quantities of oil and kernels, it is more likely that African traders and European merchant-shippers bore the brunt of the 'crisis' when it came in the 1880s.³³

For a number of reasons a sense of scale is required when attempting to estimate the importance of changes in trading conditions in Western Africa in the 1880s. Remembering that the United Kingdom's £4 to £5 million of direct trade was about half Europe's exchanges with the region, it is not surprising that contemporary journals such as *The Economist* or the *Statist* paid less attention to the plight of palm oil merchants than commercial circles in Liverpool, London, or Glasgow. In the scale of British commercial interests in Africa as a whole, traded values with the western region from Senegal to the Orange River represented about one sixth of the £30 million of annual direct trade, about three quarters of which was with Egypt, Cape Colony, and Natal.³⁴ In the year of the Berlin Conference British African trade values were 18 per cent of the £165.8 million of British trade with overseas colonies.³⁵ Such comparisons can border on the dismissive, of course, but they are necessary, because for the Board of Trade and the Colonial and Foreign Offices the clamour of sectional groups had to be balanced against other British priorities which by and large in the 1880s lay in North Africa and the Cape in terms of commercial investment and strategic vulnerability. Indeed, if commercial interest is to be deployed as an argument for intervention, then Britain's £10 million of annual trade and commercial and financial predominance in Egypt would be a better starting point than the dozen or so merchants in the Delta and the Congo.³⁶

³¹ Hopkins, *Economic History*, pp. 132-5.

³² *Liverpool Courier*, 17 Mar. 1884. Some of the seemingly static commodity prices in the *Blue Books* for the Gold Coast and Lagos from the 1870s till 1886 may result from a similar unwillingness to change a conventional barter rate for small traded quantities; or it may be a failure of the recording officials to investigate the markets.

³³ This seems to be confirmed in the colonial ports by the increased imports of currency to keep up exported

quantities. For Gold Coast rubber prices from producer to exporter, Dumett, 'The Rubber Trade', p. 89.

³⁴ Calculated from Public Record Office, Customs 4 and 8, which cover all of Africa.

³⁵ *The Economist*, 1886, 'Commercial History and Review'.

³⁶ For the position of French and British trade in Egypt, A. Ramm, 'Great Britain and France in Egypt 1876-1882', in Gifford and Louis, *France and Britain in Africa*, pp. 86-7.

Moreover, contemporary discussion of the 'depression' of the 1870s and early 1880s in Europe singled out bank failures, long-term decline in commodity prices, and changes in the discount rate (which usually heralded movements in gold), rather than short-term cycles in regional markets, as symptoms or causes of changes in the level of production, trade, and investment. Wool and wheat, not palm oil, were the main markers. According to *The Economist* the value of Britain's colonial trade indicated a short depression cycle, following the recovery of 1879, which lasted from 1882 till 1887 and was very uneven in its effects. Overseas trade in cotton manufactures fell very little. Colonial borrowing remained high at just over £30 million, including an increasing amount for 'joint stock ventures'.³⁷ More concern was shown over the cost of the Zulu wars and the condition of Egyptian finances than any downturn in West African commodities. Opposition to the Anglo-Portuguese treaty was commended in 1883, as part of *The Economist's* disapproval of protectionist policies in Europe; and the same issue of 7 April called for effective imperial control of the Transvaal and Egypt to be continued. The Berlin West Africa Conference was reviewed briefly, late in 1884, and the decisions taken were commended as a way of settling free trade questions by a consortium of powers,³⁸ though the journal was suspicious, indeed critical, of the policy of granting charters to companies in Borneo and Africa, taking the line that annexed colonies were preferable instead.³⁹ But nowhere in this example of the financial press was there any suggestion that a 'forward' move by annexations in West Africa should be made as a remedy for temporary trade depression.

III

It is not even certain that those engaged in the general import-export trade of Western Africa would have unanimously welcomed the increased costs of colonial administration by expansion of Lagos Colony or a formal British intervention in the Congo in the 1880s. Not all sectors of the coast were equally affected by deterioration in commodity prices, wars in the interior, or the manoeuvres of foreign competitors. Merchants and traders were not a homogeneous commercial community: they needed allies at home from shipping and textile trades to make their voices heard; and they were divided by the conditions of competition, their financial and administrative organization, and, not least, by commercial and political relations with African middlemen in the coastal and interior markets. There was room for different strategies, some of which called in an 'imperial factor' and other methods which did not.

By the 1880s the two trading zones which concerned the Berlin Conference most were the scene of at least four commercial techniques in the organization of the import-export trade. The first (the oldest on the coast) was to continue trade in metropolitan and local partnerships with private capital and assets concentrated at only a few bulking centres and served by agreements with African middlemen. Partnerships and agencies in the Delta ports organized by Liverpool and Glasgow firms provide probably the best-documented example, because of their price agreements, territorial demarcations, and use of consuls in disputes with Africans such as Ja Ja or Chief Nana

³⁷ *The Economist*, 1886, 'General History and Review'.

³⁸ *The Economist*, 15 Nov. 1884.

³⁹ *The Economist*, 1888, p. 1159.

of Warri.⁴⁰ They were typified, and to some extent led, by Thomas Harrison and Company which had long based its shore stations and shipping on the Delta trade, and began a belated attempt at price fixing and partial merger of Delta firms through the formation of the African Association in 1889, in response to adverse conditions in the palm oil trade. By then, local agencies were locked into a system which relied on African suppliers to such an extent that they retired from the Oil Rivers interior markets in 1893, leaving the chiefs of Bonny and Opobo in control.

A second technique, also practised by three or four of the firms represented in the Delta, was to spread the risks of trading along the coast. The Gabon-Congo bulking centres provide a good example with thirty-one points on the coast served by steamer lines and sailing vessels from the Ogowe River to Ambriz. Shipping manifests for 1883 show that fifteen European firms—British, French, Portuguese, and German—consigned regularly; and it is certain that others, particularly the Dutch, used ships of their own. Firms with the largest spread of bulking centres were Daumas, Beraud & Co. with eight posts and Edward Bros. with five. A few such as J. F. Hutton & Co. and John Holt were active in other parts of the coast, but most were located north of Ambriz, particularly at Kinsembo, Ambrizette, Banana, and the Congo River. Some such as Hatton and Cookson had written agreements with local trading chiefs (at Kinsembo), but the whole zone is distinguished by its lack of close regulation, following naval action against piracy in the 1870s, and by relatively high shipments of rubber and ivory compared with oil and kernels.

Thirdly, there is evidence that a few firms by the 1880s were anxious to restructure and move into the interior, closer to sources of supply. Alexander Miller, Brother and Company and the group formed in 1879 as the United African Company to move up the Niger by pooling assets are the outstanding examples. On the Congo the same strategy was organized by the Congo and Central African Company registered in 1882 under the joint stock Acts as a partnership between Isaac Zagury, a Liverpool merchant, and the London financier, Willoughby Norbury who paid £40,000 from the firm's nominal capital in the form of shares for Zagury's fourteen posts, steamers, and goods, plus a guaranteed dividend from the net profits.⁴¹ In 1885 some eleven trade posts were sold to the British Congo Company, including one at Boma, also in return for fully paid-up shares worth £42,170 at par values. Apart from the fact that these interests were under threat from the extension of Portuguese administration before 1885, the method of acquisition and expansion by the use of founder shares has parallels with Sir George Goldie's amalgamation of 1879, when shares were distributed according to the assets of Miller Bros., Pinnocks, the West African Company, and the Central African Trading Company.⁴²

With the virtual monopoly established by the National African Company in April 1885, when it had taken over the assets of the *Compagnie du Sénégal* and the *Compagnie Française de l'Afrique Équatoriale* and had a hundred posts and fifteen hundred employees,

⁴⁰ For company organization and relations with African merchants, C. Gertzel, 'John Holt: A British Merchant in West Africa in the Era of Imperialism', Oxford D. Phil. (1959); F. Pedler, *The Lion and the Unicorn in Africa: A History of the Origins of the United Africa Company, 1787-1931*, London 1974; C. W. Newbury, 'Credit in Early Nineteenth Century West African Trade', in *The*

Journal of African History, 13 (1972), pp. 81-95; Ofonagoro, *Trade and Imperialism*, ch. 1.

⁴¹ Rhodes House Library, Oxford. John Holt Papers, MSS. Afr. s. 1525 3/2. All these were merged into the Lower Guinea Company owned by Holt in 1889.

⁴² J. E. Flint, *Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria*, London 1960, p. 31.

commercial organization moved into a different league. It was a transition from a firm dominated by a small group of founders who held blocks of £10 shares, considered as fully paid, to a public company with some 97,000 shares held by 600 shareholders, including 103 French owners of merged assets.⁴³ With the grant of an administrative charter the new company became a territorial concession and a power in the land. Commercial agents had become consular agents making treaties in the company's name, as a basis for territorial boundaries with commercial rivals in the shape of the African Association, or foreign rivals in the shape of the French and Germans. The fourth technique, then, was the exercise of political power, both at a metropolitan and local level.

The reason for the company's need to enlist government support lay in its precarious commercial performance in the early 1880s. What looks like a success story as a British monopoly was full of risks. Although there was a regular payment of dividends, as 10 to 15 per cent of nominal capital, 1882-4, none were paid 1885-7. Reserves were run down and the company made a loss in 1885. The charter probably helped restore market confidence in shares; the exercise of company regulations and control of entry through Akassa helped improve the recorded trading surplus on annual operations. The gross profit on sales may have been as high as 15 to 18 per cent after 1885, but very large amounts of produce and merchandise were locked up annually—at an average of some £230,000, 1886-91. If these are treated as part of the capital employed, then profits as a percentage of total shareholders' equity were fairly modest at about 4.5 per cent in the 1880s.⁴⁴ Fortunately, the company was very low 'geared' and had little borrowed capital to service. But the very high requirement for working capital in a barter trade where goods were turned over very slowly made monopoly against competition not merely desirable, but a matter of survival in the mid-1880s.

IV

What, then, were the effects of increased international competition, the temporarily depressed conditions of trade, and the restructuring of companies during the period of the late 1870s and 1880s? From the archival evidence that has now accumulated, it is clear that S. E. Crowe was right in her pioneer study of the Conference to locate the prime cause of British action in the Delta, Cameroon and the Niger in 1883-5 in fears of French intervention.⁴⁵ It is also clear that the National African Company with peers of the realm, politicians, and businessmen among the public subscribers to its capital from 1882 raised the stakes significantly in its competition with French firms, though

⁴³ Flint, *Sir George Goldie*, Appendix I; John Holt Papers 4/7 for an unpublished memorandum, 17 Mar. 1891, prepared for the African Trade Section of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce which gives a different financial analysis; there is also a shareholders' list with these papers. Early financial statements are in Rhodes House, Royal Niger Company, vol. 1 'Meetings'.

⁴⁴ The case for regarding large stocks of goods (treated as assets in the financial statements) as part of working capital is that this helps to keep 'profits' in the perspective of company performance, rather than as a percentage of

nominal capital. We do not know from the accounts how the trading surplus was arrived at: no import or export figures are given in what are 'head office' statements to shareholders. Profits after tax were some £20,000 to £30,000 a year.

⁴⁵ Kanya-Forstner, *Conquest*, pp. 100-6; J. Stengers, 'L'Impérialisme colonial de la fin du XIX^e siècle: mythe ou réalité?', in *The Journal of African History*, 3 (1962), pp. 469-91; C. W. Newbury, 'The Development of French Policy on the Lower and Upper Niger, 1880-98', *The Journal of Modern History*, 31 (1959), pp. 16-26.

French government support for these was less than Goldie and his contemporaries thought.⁴⁶ There is a link with increasing difficulty on the coast because of tariffs in European enclaves and exclusion of British shipping from the Senegal and Ogowé Rivers, compounded by warnings from the British embassy in Paris in June 1884 that French protectionism was part of a widening system of differential treatment written into national legislation and treaties with African chiefs.⁴⁷ By the time the British government was actively engaged in preparations for the Conference, from October 1884, the Niger and the interests of the company were placed in a very different category from British interests in the Congo and abstracted from control by any international commission—a policy fully agreed by major shareholders such as Lord Aberdare and James F. Hutton, president of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, supporter of Leopold and sworn enemy of Portuguese protectionism.⁴⁸ British merchant firms, however, were not frightened out of the French Gabon, and Jules Ferry was also able to prevent any extension of a free trade zone or international control to French colonial enclaves in Western Africa. And it may be that the predominance of British shipping lines and the relative growth of British exports, especially cotton goods and materials for infrastructure to French possessions in the 1880s, took the edge off Anglo-French commercial rivalry.⁴⁹ But the Niger was a special case, confirmed by the take-over of French firms, company and consular treaties, and international recognition of British responsibility for jurisdiction and protection of European interests from 1884.

British official and mercantile concern about the Congo had its origins elsewhere: first, in the broader defence of British interests in Southern Africa from the mid-1870s; and secondly, in a genuine reluctance on the part of coastal firms, as distinct from metropolitan manufactures and shippers, to do business in territories under Portuguese administration.

It is worth recalling that the much abused Anglo-Portuguese treaty of 26 February 1884 was the last of a series of efforts by the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office to curb Portuguese expansion into Nyasa from 1876 and keep Delagoa Bay from serving the arms trade with the Zulus or providing an outlet for the Transvaal.⁵⁰ The abortive Lourenço Marques treaty of 1879 had linked these and other important questions concerning tariffs and freedom of navigation on the east coast and the Zambezi with a draft treaty recognizing Portuguese claims to the Congo coast. Fiascos in the Cortes, disaster at Majuba, and the collapse of both the Portuguese government and the British ambassador's tortuous diplomacy at Lisbon put a stop to the Delagoa side of the bargain, but left the sovereignty-for-free-trade gambit on the Congo to be used by the British government in 1882, as a counter to the ratification of Brazza's 'treaty' with Makoko. The arrival of serious German claims to a stake in Angra Pequena from April

⁴⁶ Rhodes House. Royal Niger Company, 'Meetings', 'The Royal Niger Company: Unofficial' 20 May 1887 MSS. Afr. 85; John Holt Papers, 4/7, African Association Memorandum.

⁴⁷ FOCP 4992, J. A. Crowe to Lord Lyons, 20 June 1884.

⁴⁸ Hutton was not quite so active against French tariffs for reasons outlined in Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, pp. 116–17; and FOCP 5023, 'Correspondence respecting the Proposed West African Conference', Anderson,

Memorandum, 14 Oct. 1884; Aberdare to Foreign Office, 16 Oct. 1884; Hutton to Foreign Office, 23 Oct. 1884.

⁴⁹ Public Record Office. Customs 8/121 (British exports) for large shipments of munitions to Senegal in 1880, despite high tariffs, and supplies of telegraph wire and equipment to French and Portuguese possessions 1884–6; see also Customs 8/124–7.

⁵⁰ E. Axelsson, *Portugal and the Scramble for Africa 1875–1891*, Johannesburg 1967, chs. 2, 3; Schreuder, *Scramble*, ch. 2.

1883, in the shape of F. A. E. Lüderitz's bid for a monopoly of trade (*Alleinhandel*) between 20° and 25° south caused additional confusion at the Cape and in London and the series of misunderstandings which angered Bismarck frustrated the local imperialists at the Cape and created a new threat to Bechuanaland, already threatened by informal Afrikaner expansion. By April 1884 German annexation of South West Africa set the seal on the failure of Gladstone's administration to keep other powers out of Britain's most important sphere of interest and control on the continent and raised the international temperature on Congo issues as well.

So it was that the makeshift agreement with the Portuguese encountered resistance on all fronts in 1884, but when men spoke of 'free trade' as an argument against any such deal, they spoke of different things.

The most immediate objections from Manchester and other merchants at the end of 1882 contained new specific charges against French or Portuguese expansion, until John Holt petitioned the Foreign Office in December, emphasizing the need to delimit claims made under Brazza's treaties and expressing a vague anxiety that the trade of the Congo might be 'confiscated for the benefit of protectionist competitors'.⁵¹ Professions of good faith by the Portuguese and the proposal for a maximum tariff of 10 per cent *ad valorem* in the treaty were undermined by news from Mozambique that more recent legislation designed to destroy British and Indian trade was to be the model for Portuguese administration of customs on the Congo coast. It was at this point that William Mackinnon and John Kirk began to lobby seriously for Leopold and the International Association, assuring the Foreign Office that the king would keep the Portuguese out of force.⁵² In March, Manchester under the guidance of Hutton stepped up its campaign against the treaty, citing Angola duties and taxes as sufficient reason for keeping the Portuguese out of territory north of the Loge.⁵³ Further assurances that lower rates would be levied on the Congo coast were received with scepticism, and the differential between duties on direct trade and trade through Portuguese ports remained embedded in the revised treaty.

But how much British trade would this injure? When the campaign against the treaty was in full swing in 1884, Hutton asserted that British direct and indirect export values were 'one million sterling' between Landana and Ambriz; and he added another million for 'the value of produce shipped from Africa', whether this was destined for British ports or not.⁵⁴ At least one historian has accepted this very high estimate by including values carried for foreign firms, but it cannot be supported either from Board of Trade figures, or by later extrapolation from figures for Congo Free State trade with Britain from 1891.⁵⁵ Moreover, the claim for 'two millions' of British

⁵¹ FOCP 4785.

⁵² Public Record Office. FO 84/1803, Kirk Memorandum, 18 Feb. 1883; Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, p. 127.

⁵³ For petitions and newspapers, John Holt Papers 10/1, 'The Congo Question'; Rhodes House Library, 730.13 r. 7, 'A Statement of facts showing how the Portuguese govern their South African Settlements, and the reasons why England should not agree to any arrangement giving them possession of the Congo District, which is at present neutral' (1884). Duties and taxes in Angola were levied by weight at a differential rate, favouring Portuguese imports, and were particularly heavy on British bulk manufactures. There

was also a differential duty on exports (5 per cent *ad valorem*) to British ports, compared with 3 per cent to Portugal, and other taxes and imposts on property and income.

⁵⁴ *Congo Treaty: Report of Meeting of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, 17th March 1884*, Manchester 1884; and contemporary press comments in John Holt Papers 10/1.

⁵⁵ Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, pp. 30-3; it is also accepted by H. L. Wesseling, 'The Netherlands and the Partition of Africa', in *The Journal of African History*, 22 (1981), pp. 495-509, p. 502 n. 37, though no statistics are supplied; see, too, Dr Herman Obdeijn for an

trade between 8° and 5° 12' south latitude (from the Congo to the Loge) did not pass unchallenged in meetings of the chamber itself; and the figures for foreign indirect trade produced for the Foreign Office for 1893 showed no more than £200,000 for the transit of British goods to all Portuguese possessions in Africa, and no more than £400,000 at the most for Liverpool's direct trade with the Congo coast.⁵⁶ Unless better evidence is produced on the size of the transit trade in British goods, Hutton's claims must be treated as an exaggeration.

The battle-cry of 'free trade' made sense, however, in the context of the more intricate negotiations between British merchants, shippers, and Leopold and his agents to make the International Association internationally respectable and prepare the way for railway and land concessions.⁵⁷ The British deputations which waited on the Foreign Office in November 1884 were 'unanimously of opinion that the International Association should become the territorial Power, under proper guarantees for complete freedom of trade'. They carried their representations to Berlin and were after bigger game than indirect exports.⁵⁸ In return for political security and minimum administrative interference, Hutton, Hatton and Cookson, Mackinnon, and Stanley connived with Leopold to found another 'East India Company' and make the king the 'Lesseps of the Congo railway'. Only at the third Conference session was the ultimate aim of a monopoly concession to build a railway round the cataracts revealed and secured in the treaty between Portugal and the Association.⁵⁹

The fact that all this scheming foundered on the antagonism of Belgian capitalists and the reluctance of Leopold himself to see his brain-child nourished by shareholders and founder-directors located in the City of London does not detract from its historical importance in lifting Congo commerce to the level of empire-building. Both on the Zambezi and the west coast rivers, as well as in their complex railway concessions for a line from Delagoa Bay to the Transvaal, Portuguese administration and financial organization were thoroughly mistrusted by European financiers in the early 1880s.⁶⁰ The lesson of Delagoa Bay and the tortuous negotiations over Zambezi transit dues was that a treaty would not prevent perverse alterations to the structure of port fees or railway rates at the level of local officials who looked on foreign investors and traders as fair game. Leopold seemed to offer something better, or as Roger Anstey put it:

The assistance to Leopold in his pioneering work on the Congo, the energies devoted to arousing an agitation against the Anglo-Portuguese treaty, the subsequent campaign to procure

account of the trade of the Dutch New African Trading Company (NAVH) which exported an average, 1880-9, only fr. 1,711,800 (£68,423) of which half was British textiles, to the Congo. Even this would not raise indirect trade to Hutton's estimates: n. 25 above.

⁵⁶ FOCP 5033, Giffen to Lister, 5 Nov. 1885. The Board of Trade figure for direct trade is a good deal closer to the estimate for total direct trade 1882-3 in British vessels: £459,191. But until we have figures for foreign shipments of British goods, the value of commerce of British origin in the Congo must remain open.

⁵⁷ Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, ch.9 'The Congo Railway Concession'.

⁵⁸ FOCP 5033, Anderson, Memorandum, 1 Nov. 1884; 'Merchants, shipowners and traders in the Lower

Congo', Declaration, 25 Oct. 1884. The principal firms represented were: Stuart and Douglas, Hatton and Cookson, Congo and Central African Company, John Holt (also representing the Liverpool Congo District Association), Elder Dempster and Company, Managers British African Steam Navigation Company, African Steamship Company.

⁵⁹ Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, p. 188; S. E. Crowe, *The Berlin West-African Conference 1884-1885*, London 1942, pp. 130-1.

⁶⁰ For the mad schemes of the American Edward McMurdo and the Lourenço Marques (Delagoa Bay) and Transvaal Railway Company, FOCP 5033, Trehane to Gladstone, 26 Dec. 1884; P. Duignan and L. H. Gann, *The United States and Africa: A History*, Cambridge 1984, pp. 162-3.

British recognition of the International Association—all stemmed from the hope . . . of making the Congo a large new sphere for British commercial and industrial enterprise, and all pointed to a railway and trading concession as the consummation of this hope.⁶¹

But trading empires are built on more than hope, and although Mackinnon and others invested in the Congo Railway Company in 1889, the benefits for British iron-masters and Manchester merchants did not measure up to the mythical trade values claimed by Hutton and other promoters in the early 1880s.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The materials we have for an analysis of the external trade of Western Africa in the last quarter of the nineteenth century indicate a trade depression of short severity from 1884 to 1888 which affected those markets already suffering from a longer-term fall in palm and kernel prices. Some areas were able to increase exported quantities; and nearly all increased traded values of rubber and ivory. The export of European manufactures to Western Africa was hardly disrupted at all; merchant shipping tonnages increased; currency exchanges increased; and there may have been a greater amount of spending by colonial administrations in the enclaves. The 'depression' therefore, was not entirely in phase with levels of economic activity in Europe, though local markets were vulnerable to metropolitan levels of demand, as well as interior wars and disruptions of the necessary channels of supply and distribution through Western Africa's diffused trade. Other regions, moreover, were also passing through a crisis arising from falling demand and restricted credit. The external trade of North Africa and the trans-Saharan transit trade were seriously limited in the 1880s;⁶² and in Southern Africa, for slightly different reasons arising from internal wars and a crisis in banking and mining, depression from 1882 to 1886 echoed the state of trade, though not the money-market, of the imperial metropolis.⁶³ Clearly the economic welfare of much of coastal Africa was increasingly influenced by cycles in the pattern of exchanges, following the end of the slave trade.

It is not so easy, however, to extend an argument from a trade cycle into administrative intervention and diplomatic partition. There was certainly a concern for trade and revenue in the administrative enclaves; and a sequence of treaties, missions to the interior, and outright bribery can be traced through British initiatives in Sierra Leone, the Gambia, the Gold Coast, 1883-8, to secure communications with the hinterland. The argument put forward by historians that both a long-term crisis of adaptation and short-term disruptions through warfare in the Yoruba interior encouraged such meddling is acceptable however in the context of international competition. Assertion of Lagos control over lagoon markets, then over Mahin in 1885, and the creation of a protected sphere of client states by a burst of treaty-making with Ife, Ilaro, Oyo, and Ilorin, 1887-9, to 'dispose of any apprehension of the French extending their territory to the back of Lagos, and cutting off the Colony from the interior' derived not merely

⁶¹ Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, p. 202.

pp. 233-46.

⁶² C. W. Newbury, 'North African and Western Sudan Trade in the Nineteenth Century: A Re-evaluation', in *The Journal of African History*, 7 (1966),

⁶³ C. G. W. Schumann, *Structural Change and Business Cycles in South Africa 1806-1906*, London 1938, pp. 83-6.

from trade conditions, but the deliberate change of policy by the British Cabinet in 1883, to stake out claims in the vicinity of Lagos, in the Delta and Cameroon ports, and on the lower Niger.⁶⁴

Indeed, on the lower Niger and in the Delta there had been minor forward moves by trading firms in the 1870s, leading to armed clashes with the middlemen of Brass and the traders of Onitsha. But there was also a crisis in commercial organization in the late 1870s and early 1880s which derived, too, from the need for better shore facilities, more trading posts, security against attack and, as German traders emphasized, the right to own freehold and trade without discrimination in a foreign enclave.⁶⁵ The technique of spreading trading posts laterally did not help firms in the Delta, and the merger of firms into the United African Company in 1879 began a penetration of the interior under joint stock capital enterprise, making new arrangements with African middlemen as the new company expanded. German firms organized their own version of lateral posts from Liberia to the Togo coast, Porto Novo, and Gabon, but also sought an administrative base at Duala from 1884 to tap the trade of the Cross River and the Cameroon grassfields.⁶⁶ But it was the National African Company which carried this technique a stage further from 1882 by enlisting political support for a charter to secure a monopoly concession against all rivals.

In the Congo the technique of spreading risks by multiplying posts and taking advantage of steamer lines and internal trade networks was given no such patronage by France or Britain, despite the grand ideas of Brazza and the efforts of a few enterprises such as the Congo and Central African Company to expand from the coast up river as far as Boma. The threat posed by an extension of Portuguese taxes and tariffs, plus an international effort to play down the repercussions of unregulated claims to the interior, ended the effort of British diplomacy to use the Portuguese as a 'neutralized' client state in East and West Africa.⁶⁷ The merchants, however, had clients of their own in rival networks in the coastal markets; and some of them aimed at supporting Leopold as another possible patron for British investment. On the whole British merchants genuinely mistrusted Portuguese administration and aimed at a joint stock concessionary company for the Congo to repeat the success of the Niger company in a free trade zone.

That they were able to conceive of such a field for venture capital by the mid-1880s owes something to the need to expand bulk cargoes during a commodity price recession and to the availability of shipping already engaged in servicing colonial enclaves, where imports were expanding, rather than decreasing during the 'crisis'. It owes something, too, to the technique of company mergers by pooling assets and exchanging founder shares from 1879, under limited liability Acts. This technique, plus some sale of shares to the general public widened the capital base of the National African Company in 1882—a necessary preliminary for long distance operations up river in conditions of poor communications and with large stocks in store and in transit.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Hopkins, *Economic History*, ch. 4; Ofanagoro, *Trade and Imperialism*, pp. 11, 39–40; O. Ikime, *Niger Delta Rivalry*, London 1969, p. 91 and n.; Newbury, *British Policy*, vol. 2, Meade to Rowe, 14 Apr. 1887; Cabinet Minute, 22 Nov. 1883.

⁶⁵ See above, n. 5.

⁶⁶ H. Stoeker (ed.), *Kamerun unter Deutscher Kolonialherrschaft*, 2 vols., Berlin 1960–8, vol. 1, ch. 1.

⁶⁷ For evidence of continued Foreign Office attention to East Africa in the context of preparations for the Conference and the use of the term 'neutralized', see the exchange of minutes in FOCP 5033, and memorandum by Anderson, 27 Oct. 1884.

⁶⁸ P. T. Bauer, B. S. Yamey, *Markets, Marketing Control and Marketing*, London 1968, p. 205 and their useful comments in ch. 10: 'Concentration in Tropical Trade'.

'Adaptation' for European firms at the period of the Conference, then, meant capital restructuring and an assertion of controls over bulking facilities, lighterage, and promotion of some African middlemen at the expense of others. Concessions won, moreover, had to be recognized in international law, if only for protection against the agents and traders of other European governments. This, indeed, was the argument and justification for the National African Company's charter. And it was the main source of interest for the merchant community in the outcome of the Berlin Conference which recognized the *de facto* position won by British capital on the Niger and ended 'free transit', but insisted on 'free trade' on the Congo, where monopoly concessions were still being negotiated.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Rhodes House. MSS. Afr. 85, 'Unofficial. The Royal Niger Company. Concise History by the Deputy-Governor', 20 May 1887.

3

Free Trade and Territorial Partition in Nineteenth-century West Africa: Course and Outcome

A. D. NZEMEKE

I

The nineteenth century has usually been characterized as a period of dramatic changes in West African history.¹ These changes were not the result of some local political metamorphosis that expressed itself in the form of wars or revolutions of any significant magnitude. In fact, before the turn of the century, the West African peoples had lived a normal life that did not yield easily to drastic changes. This is not to say that such conflicts as might bring these about did not occur now and again. But they were never, and indeed could not be, of the radical type that would seriously affect the normal pattern of daily existence. In fact the will to resist forces of disruption of any kind was a constant in local polity.

All this goes to explain why the agencies of the change which was witnessed in the West African sub-region had to be such that their real significance could not easily be identified. When, for instance, the first attempts were made to put a stop to the slave trade early in the century, this posed a puzzle to the local suppliers.² And again, when the first heralds of the foreign imperialism that was so soon to break on the West African peoples first appeared in the form of Consulates and 'Courts of Equity' local co-operation in furthering them was not wanting.³

In a somewhat similar way the mechanics of trade between Africans and Europeans which was ostensibly free for all concerned, led to political tangles that could have been avoided. Such complications were further aggravated by a growing imbalance in the home-based trade of the European partners in the West African trade itself. It was the attempt to redress this imbalance that led imperceptibly, but progressively, to a territorial partition fever which was subsequently given international recognition and sanction by the Berlin West Africa Conference of 1884-5.

In discussing the issues raised in the above observations, the intention is to focus attention on the regions either side of the Lower Niger and Congo rivers, but with particular emphasis on the former. This is because the economic background and subsequent diplomatic drama that led to the Berlin Conference and territorial partition appear to be mostly concerned with the Lower Niger Districts. The Congo question

¹ This opinion had been expressed particularly in connection with the experience in Nigeria. But an overview of events in West Africa generally will show that even though this can be said to be true of one area more than the other, the phenomenon of change was everywhere to be noticed. See O. Ikime (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian*

History, Ibadan 1980, pp. 262-302.

² I. O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta*, Oxford 1962, pp. 184-6.

³ W. B. Baikie, *Narrative of an Exploring Voyage up the Kwara and the Benue Rivers in 1854*, London 1856, p. 47.

somehow faded into the background. For the convening of the Conference was a joint undertaking by Germany and France and their aim, held far more strongly by the former than the latter, was to secure a foothold in the territories around the Lower Niger. As for the Congo, French interests there had been secured: by an agreement with King Leopold II early in the 1880s, it was arranged that if it should become necessary for his International African Association to transfer its territories in that area to another European Power it should be to none other than France.⁴ This explains why virtually all discussion on free trade and navigation and the allegiance of the indigenous peoples was heavily concentrated on the Niger.⁵

As mentioned earlier, the circumstances that led to the political take-over of territory in West Africa in the nineteenth century were concerned with the issue of trade both within the region itself and beyond. British merchant adventurers were the pioneers in the former. Trade between them and the African suppliers of produce which they shipped away to England had become entangled in a system of exchange known as the 'trust' which not only excluded many interested in free and fair competition, but also affected very adversely the peace and tranquility of African society in the area. As for external trade, it was the protectionist practice of France in certain West African trading stations under her control and in international commerce generally that made Britain devise measures to protect those spheres of trade in West Africa where her merchants had earlier secured commercial ascendancy through the system of the 'trust'. Thus, the shackles which bound trade with Africans in certain parts of the West African coasts and the restrictions which France began to impose openly on others jointly escalated mutual distrust among foreign merchants. These in turn began to make representations to their respective governments in Europe asking for 'protection' for their trade. Protection in this context was usually a veiled request for the imposition of political authority over the area of their mercantile operations.

The 'trust' was a device employed by British merchants to bind local suppliers of raw materials to *one* and the *same* foreign customer, to the exclusion of all others.⁶ It had developed as a result of an influx of many merchants into West Africa in the wake of the abolition of the slave trade, especially after the provision of a government mail-boat service to the region in the 1850s. Originally, trade was conducted in a normal and freely competitive fashion. But then it always entailed a wait of many months duration at the waterfronts for the produce to arrive. This was often a death-blow to foreign merchants because they were unable to operate in the area under such conditions. Accordingly, a practice was initiated whereby a merchant would pay a large honorary to an African dealer with a recognized capacity to make large supplies and bind him in such a way that for a long time afterwards—in some cases over a year or even more—he would not engage in any commercial transactions with other merchants.⁷ This would ensure that raw materials from such a supplier would be ready for collection whenever the foreign customer arrived, thereby obviating the need for a long stay and its attendant risks.

⁴ Cf. A. D. Nzemeke, *British Imperialism and African Response: The Niger Valley, 1851–1905*, Paderborn 1982, p. 262.

⁵ H. Delbrück (ed.), *Das Staatsarchiv: Sammlung der officiellen Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Gegenwart* (hence-

forth: *Staatsarchiv*), vol. 45 (1886), no. 8573.

⁶ Cf. Baikie, *Narrative*, p. 62.

⁷ Colonial Office Papers (henceforth: CO) 147/7, Barton to Russel (Confidential) 11 June 1864.

Admittedly, this procedure contained every element of a normal commercial deal between buyer and seller in as much as the end effect was the result of mutual consent between both parties. But it restricted the expansion of trade as well as the free and unfettered activity of all concerned. It made for a 'survival of the fittest' but in a most unnatural way. Thus, such British mercantile houses as the trading companies in Liverpool, Bristol, and Southampton with large capital outlay virtually closed the door to others of lesser means and secured the market for themselves before other Europeans arrived on the scene. Thus, free enterprise in the area had no chance at all, because of an unnatural monopolistic practice.

The 'trust' system gave rise to conflicts between African suppliers and their foreign customers. Agreements reached were not always kept. Foreign merchants had a reputation for defaulting and their behaviour towards their African trade partners was no better than their treatment of the slave exporters of former years. But it was they who gained most from the system and they were naturally interested in sustaining it.⁸

It would be a much more realistic definition of the 'trust' to call it a kind of 'truncated protectionism'. It guaranteed the continued commercial ascendancy of the old hands in the trade of the area. This does not mean that they had built a united front against any 'interlopers': it was more a question of each one for himself and every one against every other merchant. But this notwithstanding, the whole trade was in British hands, a fact which caused a later observer to remark that the Niger with its creeks and tributaries along which all this trade flowed was simply 'une fleuve anglaise'.⁹

Thus around the middle of the nineteenth century, trade in areas around the river Niger was in a kind of 'informal' stranglehold in the grip of a few British mercantile houses. To render this ascendancy effective, especially as indigenous reactions were beginning to threaten it, these houses devised and called into being an agency which they called the 'Court of Equity'.

The Court of Equity was meant to be a forum in which disputes involving any parties in trade, whether Europeans or Africans, could be settled without resorting to measures that would disrupt trade or cause social strife. However, its significance lies in that it was the first instance in which Britain's merchants in the area were united for concerted action. It thereby provided the necessary basis on which future diplomacy would have to work and make imperialism there a reality. In the early years of its foundation the Court of Equity was not given official recognition by the British government. And yet it always enjoyed the good will—and at times the active support—of the British Consuls in the region. Indirectly therefore—and perhaps without knowing it—the British government was providing cover for a protectionist syndicate.

French merchants who had been trading in some sections of the West Coast were watching these developments with great unease.¹⁰ The Company of Régis Frère which maintained trading posts in Ouidah and Lagos and environs found itself

⁸ For details of such conflicts, see J. C. Anene, *Southern Nigeria in Transition: Theory and Practice in a Colonial Protectorate*, Cambridge 1966, p. 165.

⁹ Foreign Office Papers (henceforth: FO) 84/1654,

Aberdare to Granville, 28 Feb. 1883.

¹⁰ The position is admirably illustrated by B. Schnapper, *La Politique et le commerce français dans le golfe de Guinée de 1838 à 1871*, Paris 1861, pp. 184-200.

unable to function where the Court of Equity and consortia of British merchants operated. Also in Lagos were the German firms of G. L. Gaiser and William O'Swald & Co., both based in Hamburg. They had come there in 1851 to pursue the cowry trade. In Lagos, things were somewhat different from what obtained around the enclaves of the Courts of Equity, but even then, the Germans had to depend on the good will of the British Consul who never missed an opportunity to remind them that if it came to a showdown with the African Chieftains and their followers, they would not expect any help from him as 'the forces of England at the call of the Consulate were meant to be employed only for the protection of Her Majesty's subjects'.¹¹ In spite of this bleak state of affairs, the Germans had been doing valuable trade in Lagos. Here, there was no Court of Equity and it is a testimony to the exclusive and protectionist stance of this institution that, from the observation of the same Consul, the German firms had secured for themselves 'the lion's share in the large and increasing trade of the country',¹² though they were in the minority among the foreign national groups doing trade there. Thus the contrasts in trade being carried on within and outside the zones of the Courts of Equity were very glaring. The situation created was very inauspicious and the French were the first to attempt to restore a balance. When Lagos was declared a British crown colony in 1861, they immediately reoccupied certain posts along the coast which they had previously abandoned as non-viable commercial stations. This event is very significant. Considering what had led to it, it is an indication that the 'scramble' had begun, so that its features in the 1880s immediately before the Berlin West Africa Conference were only a wider dimension of the same phenomenon. The only difference here would be that this earlier version was the outcome of an informal economic protectionism as opposed to the bare-faced practices that were to characterize the period immediately antecedent to the Berlin Conference.

But the full significance of the measures thus gradually introduced by the British and French governments into West Africa in the 1860s does not seem to have been fully appreciated by either party. The former at least seemed to nurture the ideas of 'free trade' for the area in line with the vogue current in Europe at that time as a result of the Cobden Treaty of 1860. For instance, in 1865, a Parliamentary Select Committee had debated and recommended the abandonment of some of Britain's settlements in West Africa and the retention of a few which were judged necessary for a sustained attack on the slave trade and the introduction of normal trade by whoever was interested.¹³ There were indeed isolated voices that called for territorial annexation as a means of achieving both ends; but officially Britain saw it differently at the time. This explains why, thinking of trade without political bias, they went along with strengthening the hands of the Consuls on the west coast by giving them formal authority over the Courts of Equity. The instrument employed in this move was an Order-in-Council promulgated in February 1872.

France also appears to have been thinking in terms of trade, pure and simple. For, reacting to the introduction of customs dues on merchandise being exported from Lagos after the proclamation of the crown colony, she began to impose prejudicial

¹¹ Hamburgische Senatsakten, Cl. VI, Copy of the enclosure no. 2, vol. 4a, Fasc. 2, Invol. 16f (Schutz in Lagos).

¹² A. Burns, *History of Nigeria*, London 1963, p. 127.

¹³ Parliamentary Papers, 1865, V. Report of the Select Committee on the state of British Settlements on the West Coast of Africa.

customs rates of her own on foreign commerce in her West African territories. This had been preceded by a policy of 'exclusion' whereby British merchants were barred from operating in areas where her influence was preponderant because of competition which was always disadvantageous to her commerce in the affected area.¹⁴

The customs rates introduced by the British at Lagos were considered moderate and necessary for defraying the costs of local administration. When the French began to impose their own, it was obviously by way of a retaliation; for they never believed that the British action proceeded from anything other than monopolistic intentions. This closes one chapter in the history of European trade in West Africa and opens another that began progressively to point to Berlin and is characterized by *open* protectionist policies as against the former practice of secret hostility.

II

The somewhat strained commercial relations between England and France in their trade in West Africa did not as yet provide any cause for complaint. It was understood that without formal agreements the restrictive measures of either of them in areas under their respective influence could not legitimately be questioned by anyone. Apart from Algeria, no place in Africa was included in the free trade agreements referred to above as the Cobden Treaty which was entered into by several European countries, France and England included. Thus, the British continued to tax goods exported from their West African settlements while France adopted even sharper measures. But by 1872 signs began to appear that this situation was going to deteriorate further. The prelude to this was a demand by the French National Assembly itself that taxes be imposed on all foreign shipping that came to French colonies to trade.¹⁵

This latest development was very curious. The issue of tariff regulations in the colonies had originally been considered and the details worked out by French colonial administrations and promulgated without always having to obtain clearance from the colonial Ministry.¹⁶ When a uniform tariff system for all French West African colonies was considered in 1868, formal application for approval was indeed made to Paris, but then it was treated administratively and the National Assembly was not brought into the picture. The present move by this body must have been prompted by causes of extraordinary magnitude since the receipts from the customs dues and other fiscal impositions on foreign commerce would not amount to much. But its consequences for the history of West Africa were to be far-reaching.

The interest now being shown by the National Assembly in the taxation of foreign commerce in French colonies cannot be entirely unconnected with the economic situation in the metropolis itself. Such a situation had to be bound up with the liquidation of the indemnities arising from the war of 1870 with Prussia. This assumption seems all the more plausible since by 1873 these indemnities had been

¹⁴ See Nzemeke, *British Imperialism*, pp. 218-22 for details.

traité' of 1873, 15 July 1873.

¹⁶ C. Bloch, *Les Relations entre la France et la Grande Bretagne, 1871-1878*, Paris 1950, pp. 41-3.

¹⁵ FO 24/2007, Addenda by Lord Lyons to 'Project du

paid up and every effort was being made to revive the economy. For, with regard to the colonies, the situation would be helped if the costs of local administration were paid for from funds raised on the spot by whatever means. This would in turn save the French colonial ministry the burden of providing subsidies for the payment of colonial officers' salaries and other sundry requirements of colonial administration.

The demand by the National Assembly for new tax rates on foreign shipping and trade in the colonies appears to have been part of a more far-reaching policy decision. For by 1872 France had begun to question the wisdom of abiding by the terms of the Free Trade (Cobden) Treaties of 1860. She had requested Britain, one of the parties to the agreement, to grant some relaxation in her favour with regard to the taxation of certain articles.¹⁷ The argument ran somewhat as follows: France was bound to several countries including Britain to abide by the principle of free trade whereby all the partners to the contract were to abstain from imposing *preferential* tariffs on the commerce of other contractants in their territories. This would mean that she could not make good the losses she had been incurring through the payment of the indemnities to Prussia except with regard to such of her trade with these partners as was not affected by the free trade treaties. Except for Algeria, trade in her colonies was not so affected. If additionally some relief could be obtained in trade with Britain especially with regard to what was known as the 'most-favoured-nation-clauses' it would help the French position enormously.¹⁸

Debate on the tariff issue continued until 1877 when it was decided not to renew the Cobden Treaty as agreement could not be reached. In the following year, France then streamlined the tariff regulations obtaining in her West African colonies, bringing them up to the level of the ones now envisaged for the European region.

For the first three years following this measure, the economic situation showed signs of improving. Obviously impressed by this, the French merchant class came out with an express approbation of what had been done and required the government to ensure that the new tariff regulations would not at any time in the future be altered except when such a step would further their advantages, particularly in trade with West Africa.¹⁹ As though waiting for a favourable climate of public opinion, the colonial Ministry went further and introduced new regulations in West Africa. In 1880, the navigation of West African rivers in French colonies was closed to British merchant ships and further discriminatory tariff ordinances were introduced. All this was followed by a new concerted attempt to acquire new colonies in Africa and wherever this was achieved differential tariff regulations in favour of French merchants were enacted and rigorously applied.

With this, the 'scramble' had actually entered its second phase even though, so far, it bore the marks of a unilateral action. What is so poignantly clear about the whole development up till now is the fact that the nascent spate of territorial occupation was the direct result of a progressive repudiation of free commercial enterprise for all interested in the trade of West Africa. *Laissez-faire* had come into evil repute, at least with France.²⁰ It had little chance of operating in European trade

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 44.

¹⁸ FO 27/2007, Commercial, no. 213, Lord Lyons to FO, 15 July 1873.

¹⁹ Cf. C. W. Newbury, 'The Protectionist Revival

in French Colonial Trade: The Case of Senegal', in *Economic History Review*, 21 (1968), pp. 320-41, p. 335.

²⁰ Bloch, *Relations*, p. 40.

with West Africa as the above illustrations show. When it died in Europe, the effect in West Africa was to be a political one; for in as much as the consequences were obviously going to be disadvantageous for all others whose nationals were involved in West African trade, *precautionary* measures began to be contemplated and this was to give birth to a 'rush' to acquire African dependencies: a step which precipitated the Berlin Conference.

The measures in question here were at this early stage an affair in which England alone had had to face what was considered an unwarranted French encroachment on the 'free enterprise' of all nations on the African continent. After a series of protracted negotiations, an agreement was reached with France in 1882 regarding their respective colonies of Sierra Leone and Senegal and the treatment of each other's nationals in these places. But thereafter, the French launched a campaign of treaty-making with African Chieftains in 1883 in the districts of the Lower Niger.²¹ Such agreements always contained clauses giving France political rights in the territory of the African chief concerned. In the light of what French practice had been, this was simply an attempt to destroy politically the 'exclusive' commercial hegemony which British merchants had achieved through the employment of the 'trust' system earlier.

Apparently trying to avoid a direct confrontation, England went to contract a treaty with Portugal in February 1884. This was in connection with the eventual transfer of the latter's territories in the Congo to Britain.

Up till then the affair had merely preoccupied the two old rivals. But with this treaty everybody's interest was, so to say, awakened. And curiously enough, not every European country now voicing dissatisfaction was carrying on any significant trade or possessed any worthwhile piece of territory in Africa.²² But the battle was joined and Bismarck was in the lead. The international political climate thus created was such that the interest being generated in Africa was to lead to what can best be described as a 'stampede'. And if it had come to this, a very explosive situation would have been created.²³

Many interpretations have been made of Bismarck's interest in the Anglo-French manoeuvres regarding African possessions. The important point for the purpose of this study is that it was as a result of these that he came up with the idea of a conference to settle matters concerning West Africa as they affected European nations.²⁴ This was another occasion on which he employed what we can call the 'conference tactic' to diffuse explosive European problems. All but the one about to be convened had stemmed directly and purely from issues exclusively arising from European political tangles and diplomacy. As for the Berlin West Africa Conference of 1884, it would not have become necessary if normal trade situations had prevailed in the West African region. Restrictive measures, at first covert in the form of the 'trust' system and then overt in such undisguised practices as the French protectionist regulations, bred suspicion. Suspicion led to precautionary counter-measures. These

²¹ Ministère des Affaires Étrangères (MAE), Possessions anglaises de la Côte occidentale, no. 86, 1883-8, Report.

²² *The Liberal*, 14 Oct. 1884.

²³ W. L. Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments, 1871-1890*, New York 1950, pp. 6-26, discusses the general situation at the time.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

in turn threatened the general peace which, admittedly, at the time hung precariously in the balance because of internal European difficulties.²⁵

The confrontations now arising from the angle of trade in West Africa were indeed additions to the already highly charged relationships between European states. However, the Berlin Conference was not summoned to settle issues arising from this unhealthy situation, but rather the *new* addition to it: for even after the Conference had disbanded, the old animosities persisted. The decisions of the Conference were to ensure that there were no further exacerbations to these conflicts from the direction of squabbles over trade and its concomitant of territorial acquisitions in far away West Africa.

III

The Berlin West Africa Conference was the child of pure chance. The events we have been discussing so far could have ended otherwise but for a casual move made in London on 27 April 1884 by two diplomats: the French and German ambassadors to Britain. The former had asked his colleague what he thought about the Anglo-Portuguese treaty concluded only two months earlier. The fact that this enquiry had been made was reported to Berlin and Bismarck immediately ordered the German legation in Paris to say that Germany would be interested in a joint action by both countries on this question.²⁶ This was a bait and France swallowed it with gusto.

The French reaction on this matter is understandable. Here, indeed, was an opportunity to reverse in the Niger regions the set-backs to her protectionist and exclusive politics in West Africa. While recommending the question of free trade as the paramount issue to be dealt with by the Conference, France at the same time told Bismarck privately that, 'le Gouvernement français ne se propose pas d'étendre l'application de ce régime à ses établissements coloniaux du Gabon, de la Guinée, ou du Sénégal.'²⁷ Rather, it was in the Niger districts that the *laissez-faire* principle should be imposed if France could not secure her political objectives there. Bismarck agreed: 'Wir hätten eine internationale Regelung der Handels- und Schiffahrts verhältnisse am Niger auch unsererseits schon in dem Bereich der Möglichkeit gezogen', was his reply.²⁸ And so it was. The bone of contention at the Conference was going to be the Niger. The Congo question seemed to be more or less peripheral. In fact it was only with reference to the declarations concerning the non-imposition of extraordinary toll fees on merchant shipping of other nations plying along the Congo river that matters relating thereto came up for discussion.

The Berlin Conference was not intended by Bismarck to *halt* the race to acquire new territories in West Africa but to *control* it so that it did not become injurious to the participants. This was how he saw it. Not, indeed, that he was personally interested in the acquisition of colonial dependencies as such. There is enough evidence to confirm this from his views as put forward before a syndicate of merchants from Hamburg in 1872 as well as the circumstances surrounding the occupation of the Cameroons in 1884. Rather his position was that if the partition of

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 78-86 and *passim*.

²⁶ *Staatsarchiv*, 45 (1886), no. 8559.

²⁷ FO 97/434, 14 Oct. 1884 (Enclosure).

²⁸ *Staatsarchiv*, 45 (1886), no. 8595.

Africa had to be, then it should go on, but not to the detriment of certain European interests, particularly as they touched the new Reich of which he was the founder. Now, considering the nature of the tangles of European politics in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, it was really difficult for the new German Empire not to become involved or at least closely affected by any squabbles, whatever their source, between any of the European states.²⁹

As for Britain, she definitely went to the Conference to *secure* and to *further* the partition and acquisition of new colonial territories in West Africa, notwithstanding the fact that she had been pushed into it by the unscrupulous preferential tariff system of her old colonial rival. Before the Conference met, her policy was quite clearly stated. As was claimed, since

the British Consul has for years been the authority in disputes among the natives while the Courts of Equity under his supervision have settled trade disputes, and as we have now concluded treaties along the whole [coast] line by which the territory is placed under British protection, as regards the Niger we should take our seats [at the Conference] as a Niger Power.³⁰

The Conference was to be a kind of court that would be responsible for an *orderly* management of the process of territorial partition in West Africa. Pious protestations touching, for instance, on the civilization of the indigenous people of the area, or undertakings for 'l'extinction des maux'³¹ among them were beside the point and were merely face-saving devices for the international respectability of the grand assembly that the Conference really was. Indeed the Conference had no sooner disbanded in January 1885 than these were forgotten; for at a later Conference held in Brussels after sections of territory had been acquired and their consolidation was already in progress, it became necessary to remind everyone of the noble undertakings made in Berlin.

As for France, her position has been made only too clear in the foregoing discussions and needs no further commentary. Regarding the other nations invited to the Conference, very few had any stakes in West Africa at all. But they all saw the assembly as an agency through which they could make their voice heard or even, perhaps, achieve something in the uncharted regions of the West African land mass. Views expressed in some Spanish newspapers at the time were described by an official of the British Foreign Office as 'a fair specimen of the public feeling on the subject'.³² All this goes to show, as we have already observed, that the Berlin West Africa Conference was not intended by anyone to stop or restrict the scramble but rather to arrest a stampede that would straight away end in unsavoury consequences. It was, for all practical purposes, intended to be a 'safety valve'.

And so the Conference convened. Deliberations and decisions were concluded early in 1885. Soon after that protectorates were being proclaimed and colonies declared here and there. Thanks to the agreements at the Conference, courteous reserve was maintained by all the parties during this process, so that serious international clashes did not occur. But confrontations of a different kind did take place. African chiefs and

²⁹ See Langer, *European Alliances*, pp. 217-47 for a discussion on the sensitive nature of inter-European politics at the time.

³⁰ FO 77/434, Memo on Points for the Conference

(Printed) 426., West Africa.

³¹ *Staatsarchiv*, 45 (1886), no. 8595.

³² *The Liberal*, 14 Oct. 1884.

rulers, unaware of the reality and factual significance of what had transpired, began to resist measures being introduced by the agents of the new protectorates. At Lagos, the chiefs cried out that they had been tricked, and protested. African entrepreneurs—the middlemen who had been supplying raw materials to the cargo ships along the coast and other waterfronts—found that their business activities were now being restricted. They immediately revolted and the people of Brass on the coast who lived mainly by trade, led the uprising. The people in the interior also took up the challenge. Sporadic outbursts took place in parts of the hinterland, culminating in a long drawn-out contest in the Asaba region with the palm oil belt where the Royal Niger Company that was mandated to govern the newly acquired territory had established its headquarters.³³

Such opposition was suppressed. But the resentment lived on among the peoples affected and is here and there immortalized to this day in displays and songs that developed soon afterwards. It was the memory of all this that inspired the fight for independence. Even after independence, there still remained traces of opposition and resentment at what had been done before, during, and after the Berlin Conference. For when the Charter of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) was being drawn up in the 1960s, it was hotly debated whether the geopolitical boundaries of the African States should not be scrapped and something more realist and in accord with African cultural demands be set up instead. The genesis of it all was the failure to uphold free trade, both in Europe and in West Africa itself.

³³ Successive uprisings of this order were put down by punitive expeditions organized by the Royal Niger Company. The last, and perhaps the most violent of them

all, known in the local language as the *Ekumeku* war, erupted in October 1898 and dragged on until 1911.

Chartered Companies and the Transition from Informal Sway to Colonial Rule in Africa

JOHN FLINT

Chartered companies have, in the long history of European overseas colonization, played the predominant role in the initial acquisition and control of overseas territories. Whether we take geographical area or populations conquered as an index of extent, it is evident that few overseas colonies were established or ruled in their early years by direct state action on the part of European metropolitan governments. The technique of entrusting overseas expansion and conquest to private interests was in origin, like overseas imperialism itself, feudal. The early crusading kingdoms in the eastern Mediterranean were organized and established by younger scions of European royal and ducal families, and governed as marcher lordships which had achieved sovereign independence. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the Spanish and Portuguese *conquistadors*, in an age of royal centralization and the curbing of feudal privileges at home, were unable to establish crusading sovereignties in Latin America, yet nevertheless behaved as feudal vassals with near autonomy in the early years of conquest. The English followed the same technique in their early colonial ventures, with Royal letters patent chartering 'Lords Proprietor' in the Caribbean settlements and some of those on the American mainland.

The use of joint stock companies, incorporated by royal charter giving powers of colonization, was a natural step by which the late feudal monarchies could 'modernize' colonial expansion overseas. The royal charter, especially in England and the low countries, had been used since the early Middle Ages as a means for incorporating commercial and urban interests into the feudal order. Charters were granted to town governments, to guilds, and in later times of companies of 'merchant adventurers' as a means of accumulating wealth and services outside the agricultural sector, under controlled conditions which would prevent commercial capitalism from undermining the social order and values of a feudal society while strengthening the crown's ability to curb over-mighty subjects among the nobility. The contractual nature of such charters, granting monopoly privileges and freedom from external inference in return for specific services and payments to the crown, appeared to be an ideal relationship whereby nations like England, and later the Dutch Republic, might permit a surge of overseas enterprise, trade, and colonization, at no cost to the national treasury.

Thus, while the Iberian nations built their empires in South and Central America by straightforward feudal techniques, the English increasingly abandoned the Lords Proprietor technique and turned to chartered companies as instruments of colonization. The Dutch, successful in their revolt against Spain, at once followed suit. With hardly a significant exception, the entire framework of the English and

Dutch sea-borne empires from the end of the sixteenth century was founded and constructed, at least in the initial phase of each colony and often long thereafter, by chartered companies. The Dutch East and West India companies laid the basis for New York, the Dutch empire in the Caribbean, and the attempt to take Brazil, for the Cape settlement in South Africa, the slave trading posts in West Africa, control of Ceylon, and the vast enterprise in Indonesia. British North America was grounded in the histories of the Virginia Company, the Massachusetts Bay Company and the later Hudson's Bay Company which laid claim to the Canadian West. Britain's Asian empire was also essentially the result of the activities of the East India Company. The direct acquisitions after the Napoleonic wars of Ceylon, Mauritius, the Cape colony, and Singapore (though these were ruled directly by the colonial office) were part of a grand strategy thought necessary to protect the interests of the chartered company in India. Even seventeenth-century France, despite its weak commercial bourgeoisie, attempted to coerce capital into chartered company ventures in India, the Caribbean, and West Africa. In the high age of mercantilism overseas colonization and chartered companies appeared indistinguishable.

With the emergence of industrial capitalism in Britain, however, the control of overseas colonies by chartered companies increasingly took on an anachronistic cast. Adam Smith, the prophet of the new order and economic morality, castigated chartered companies as part of his attack on mercantilism, privilege, monopoly, and artificial interference with the market place. Chartered companies were akin to slavery, tariffs, navigation laws, and other attempts to interfere with the hidden hand of natural economic laws, and prevented the fresh winds of competition from developing colonies to a natural prosperity in line with their material and human resources.¹ At the same time industrial capitalism and its individualist morality gave rise to the new humanitarianism, as well as to Benthamite doctrines of efficiency and utility, which came together in a powerful surge of criticism against the East India Company, which excluded from India not merely its commercial rivals, but Christian missionaries and evangelicals. It was also a byword for corruption just as the small cloud of the reform movement could be seen on the horizon.

The British, however, were never a nation to sweep away old institutions simply because they offended both logic and sentiment. While a series of India Bills reformulated the East India Company's powers, steadily stripping it of its monopolistic trading privileges, opening up the subcontinent to free traders, Christian missionaries, and even more mischievous elements, the company continued to rule India, becoming a most curious institution—a profit-making company which, after 1833, did no trade in India and paid a 6 per cent annual dividend out of the profits of the revenues it collected. Meanwhile new chartered companies were actually set up as instruments for colonization in the early nineteenth century, albeit often in odd guise. Freetown, capital of the 'Province of Freedom', was established by the chartered (and impecunious) Sierra Leone Company of 1787, a body consisting entirely of evangelical anti-slavery activists. In 1808, already subsidized by parliamentary grants, the bankrupt colony was taken over so that Freetown could function as the headquarters of the Royal Navy's anti-

¹ Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, ed. E. Cannon, New York 1937, Book IV, Ch. 7, pt. 3, pp. 590-1.

slavery squadron enforcing the 1807 Act abolishing the slave trade. Britain's first African colony was thus, like the second (Cape Colony was officially annexed in 1815) a chartered company legacy. In the 1830s and 1840s it looked as if the Gold Coast might also fall under chartered company administration, though the crown resumed control from the merchant's committee in 1844, after the negotiation of the Fante Bond. In the same period chartered companies, this time attempting experiments with Gibbon Wakefield's ideas of 'systematic colonization', played significant roles in the foundation of colonies in New Zealand and South Australia.

The great Indian 'Mutiny' of 1857 and its bloody aftermath, however, appeared to bring to an end the age of colonization by chartered companies. The East India Company was now blamed for the very reforms which its critics and reformers had earlier insisted upon; these, it was alleged, had provoked the outbreak of violent traditionalism by offending social norms held dear by Muslim and Hindu alike. In 1858 the company was abolished, and a direct British Administration under the India Office established. There remained only one other British chartered company ruling territory, the Hudson's Bay Company, an institution which was clearly ineffective in protecting British sovereignty and territorial claims from the expanding aggression of the rival empire of the United States. For the British, an essential characteristic of the Federal Dominion of Canada, formed in 1867, was its ability to supersede the Hudson's Bay Company and incorporate the western territories to hold them against US imperial expansion. The bargain was sealed with the transfer of the company's territories to Canada in 1869. For the first time since the chartering of the Virginia Company in 1606, there was no part of the British empire ruled by a chartered company administration. British public opinion found such a situation entirely wholesome; the age of chartered companies had passed away, many would have added long after it should have done. The idea that chartered companies would ever be revived as instruments of colonization was unthinkable. It was impossible to imagine that such relics of a mercantilist age could be resurrected to serve the imperial needs of a free-trading industrial Britain, which had long abandoned navigation laws, protective tariffs, and state-supported monopolies.

Yet, within twelve years, such a revival had actually begun with the chartering, in 1881, of the British North Borneo Company, by none other than Gladstone's great reforming government of 1880-5.² The same Liberal administration hammered out the details for a charter for the Royal Niger Company, though the charter was not granted until July 1886 by Lord Salisbury's Conservatives. In 1888 came the charter for the Imperial British East African Company, and in the following year Cecil Rhodes's British South Africa Company. If we examine the extent of territory acquired by Britain during the partition of Africa, it becomes clear at once that by far the largest part was acquired as a result of chartered company activities. The lower Niger valley and northern Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Zanzibar, Southern Rhodesia, and Northern Rhodesia were all acquired directly by chartered companies, while the acquisition of Malawi was subsidized by Cecil Rhodes's BSAC. These territories represented more than 75 per cent of British acquisitions south of the Sahara, both in area and population. Direct acquisition by the colonial office secured only the hinterlands of Sierra

² K. G. Tregonning, *Under Chartered Company Rule, North Borneo, 1881-1946*, Singapore 1958, is the fullest story of the British North Borneo Company.

Leone, Lagos, and the Gold Coast, kept tiny Gambia, and took over Bechuanaland. British chartered companies played as large a part in the partition of Africa in Britain's age of free trade as they had done in North America and India in the age of mercantilism. Moreover, as earlier in India, the activities of chartered companies often triggered direct British action elsewhere. Thus Rhodes's attempt to overthrow the Transvaal government in the ill-fated Jameson Raid of 1895 led almost inevitably to the Anglo-Boer War and the annexations of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, and in turn to the creation of the Union of South Africa in 1910.

How can we explain this curious revival of an antiquated mercantilist technique in the high age of British free trade? Was the chartered company exactly what it appeared to be? There can be little doubt that the widespread use of chartered companies in the period of 'high imperialism' was a living reality which inspired J. A. Hobson and radical circles in Britain to suggest that the economic taproot of imperialism was the desire of finance capitalists at a time of 'saturated' domestic demand to seek investments overseas and have them protected by the Union Jack.³ In this idea was the origin of Lenin's fundamental shift, in *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*,⁴ from Karl Marx's original doctrine of imperialism as the progressive force which would break the Asian mode of production and usher in the dialectic process of class struggle,⁵ to the concept of imperialism as a decadent Indian summer of European capitalism. This latter tradition has coloured much subsequent thinking on imperialism, giving way only recently to a revival of Marx's original stress on class analysis and modes of production. No other phenomenon did more to suggest the financial tap-root of imperialism than the revival of the chartered companies, and especially that of Cecil Rhodes's British South Africa Company. In the chartered company, it seemed, the financiers stood naked and unashamed, openly parading their need to control the political process of territorial expansion by taking the authority blatantly upon themselves so as to protect their own investments. Cecil Rhodes even named his private colony after himself.

BRITISH PREDOMINANCE IN AFRICA AND 'INFORMAL SWAY'

Historians of the partition of Africa have tended to see that movement as something new, surprising, and even aberrant; hence the misleading term 'the New Imperialism' which is frequently applied to the period. Imperialism, of course, 'is one with Nineveh and Tyre',⁶ while its European version which spread its yoke to overseas continents originated with the Renaissance, after a false start in the Crusades. It is in the nature of things political that powerful states, capable of mobilizing disciplined armed force to deploy against feeble regimes, will tend to use that force to coerce weak states which refuse to do the bidding of the strong, where such 'obstruction' is thought to endanger important or vital interests. By the 1870s American 'Indians', Australian aboriginals, the Maoris of New Zealand, and the Indians of India had all experienced these bitter realities. There is thus nothing 'peculiar' about the partition of Africa, except its

³ J. S. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study*, London 1902.

⁴ V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, London 1933.

⁵ K. Marx and F. Engels, *On Colonialism*, Moscow n.d.

⁶ R. Kipling, 'Recessional'.

timing. The outbreak of partitioning after 1879 was a return to normalcy; what was peculiar was the fact that so little of the continent, whose states were relatively helpless if faced with determined European aggression, had been taken under colonial rule by that time.

It is therefore the period from 1815 to the 1879s which is the 'peculiar interlude'.⁷ It was not that Africa was left alone; the contrast between the enormous power of a European state and the weakness of African sovereignties became increasingly apparent. Britain, the most powerful overseas arm of Europe, steadily asserted its influence over the continent, yet this did not result in significant annexations, except in the far south. Britain showed no desire to establish formal colonial rule, except in special cases severely limited in extent, like that of the annexation of Lagos in 1861 as a 'sufficient political function'⁸ for the wider interests of the British in penetrating Africa commercially, protecting the cultural impact of her missionaries, and providing secure bases for the influence of consuls backed by gunboats. The evangelical equation 'Christianity plus Commerce equals Civilization' was a fitting oversimplification for a nation committed to the ideology of free trade. A fourth C, 'Colonization', was conspicuous by its absence.

A number of factors explain this self-denial. Britain was able, after 1815, to achieve her objectives in Africa without the need to assume expensive and troublesome responsibilities of formal colonial rule. That she would enjoy this luxury for six decades rested first and foremost on British naval supremacy after the end of the Napoleonic wars. The annexations of that time, Freetown (1807), the Cape, Mauritius, and Ceylon (all 1815) gave the Royal Navy a secure chain of bases, and the campaign against the slave trade continuously demonstrated its power.⁹ British industrial supremacy, its financial institutions, and merchant marine meant that British traders in Africa had no need for the artificial pressures which a colonial administration could exert in order to sell their goods and buy African produce. This might have been otherwise had foreign powers been willing and interested to establish colonies and colonial tariffs to protect their own and exclude British traders. But this was not the case. Before 1870 Germany and Italy had not completed their processes of unification, Russia was occupied in the East, Austria in the Balkans and with her internal nationalisms, the United States of America was busy colonizing the West and was wracked by the Civil War. Only Portugal and France played a role in Africa before 1870. Portugal's empire was somewhat fictional, moribund, and the country was almost a British client state. France, engulfed by upheavals internally in 1830, 1848, 1852, and 1870, was neither willing nor able to challenge Britain's informal sway, which permitted her to expend blood and treasure in the conquest of Algeria.

Africa also presented some impediments and deterrents to any British desire to establish formal colonial rule, particularly in inland regions. The hazards to European health were the most formidable, especially before use of quinine from the 1850s; colonial office officials well knew that in advocating colonial annexation they would be

⁷ G. S. Graham, *Peculiar Interlude: The Expansion of England in a Period of Peace, 1815-1850*. George Arnold Wood Lecture, University of Sydney, 1959.

⁸ R. Robinson and J. Gallagher, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', in *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, 6 (1963), pp. 1-15.

⁹ G. N. Sanderson, 'The European Partition of Africa: Coincidence or Conjunction?', in E. F. Penrose (ed.), *European Imperialism and the Partition of Africa*, London 1975, pp. 1-54, p. 18. G. S. Graham, *Great Britain and the Indian Ocean, 1810-1850*, Oxford 1967, pp. 1-14.

sentencing colleagues to death. Expeditions up the Niger and wars in Ethiopia and Ashanti had demonstrated the extent of the menace.

The partition of Africa occurred not because of any change in British policy. The status quo ante was, as far as the British were concerned, all for the best in the best of all possible worlds. What the British failed to understand before the 1870s, and only came slowly and painfully to realize in the 1880s, was that the policy of informal sway rested upon peculiar and unique factors which the British were in no position to control. With great rapidity after 1870 the world of international diplomacy was turned upside down. Germany and Italy emerged as unified states. France recovered from the disaster of 1870 and consolidated the Republic of republicans after 1878. Their sense of nationalism was unwilling to leave the field open to an unchallenged British naval, marine, commercial, and industrial supremacy and competition began, intensely, on all these fronts. Africa would be an obvious testing ground for these ambitions. Normalcy was returning to international relations. Yet the British were unwilling to face these realities with any forthright and rapid pre-emptive colonial annexations which could have sealed Africa off from the competition. Britain was not prepared to face the combined hostility which such moves would have provoked; nor were British statesmen at all convinced that the meagre trade and resources of Africa were worth defending at such enormous cost and responsibility. They sought instead to defend their informal predominance by the minimal and most economical means which they could find. It was in these attempts to find ways to meet the challenge of foreign powers in Africa by methods falling short of formal colonial annexation that we shall find the origins of the revival of the chartered company.

From 1870 the British, as if sensing the new forces at work, began to formalize the rhetoric of informal sway at the very moment when their ability to uphold that sway was crumbling. Essentially the British were attempting to prevent a partition of Africa by methods which had isolated Latin America under Anglo-American informal sway since the 1820s. There, with the aid of white settler collaborationist regimes, British and US naval power and influence had maintained the 'independence' of their clients. The British now attempted, though in fumbling and inept fashion, to establish a unilateral 'Monroe doctrine' for Africa and to make this effective through a frantic search for collaborating African comprador states. Egypt's colonial ambitions on the Somali coast and in the Sudan were encouraged, Zanzibar was provided with arms, ammunition, and a mini-general to make good its claim to control the East African coast and interior, and Britain made sure that the two clients and their British-officered armies were not permitted to make war on each other.¹⁰ On the lower Niger Emir Masaba of Nupe, in return for arms and ammunition, agreed to extend his protection to British traders.¹¹ Lord Carnarvon, Colonial Secretary after February 1874, tried to cobble together a white-settler federation in South Africa which might eventually serve as a self-governing agent of British imperial interests and a relief to the British taxpayer. Carnarvon was ready to resist Portuguese expansionism, as well as that of King Leopold of the Belgians. But this must be done by diplomacy: 'We cannot admit rivals in the East or even the central parts of Africa . . . To a considerable extent, if not

¹⁰ R. Coupland, *The Exploitation of East Africa, 1856-1890*, London 1939, pp. 271-80; J. S. Galbraith, *Mackinnon and East Africa, 1878-1895*, Cambridge 1972, pp. 29-70.

¹¹ J. E. Flint, *Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria*, London 1960, pp. 24-5.

entirely, we must be prepared to apply a sort of Munro [*sic*] doctrine to much of Africa.'¹² In West Africa it was even hoped that France might join such an arrangement. The bait of ceding the Gambia was held before French eyes, in return for which France and Britain would define mutual spheres of influence over the West African coastline, and keep out of each others' areas of informal sway.¹³

The British dream of a 'Monroe Doctrine for Africa' died hard, but it was a forlorn hope from its inception. Africa was not Latin America, and France was not a United States which could combine anticolonial rhetoric with local industrial and naval power. Nor were any of the collaborationist states of Africa comparable with the settler-militaristic dictatorships of Latin America, which could put up more than token resistance and mobilize significant mass support in fending off European invasions pending the arrival of outside support from the USA, as Napoleon III had found to his cost in the Mexican adventure.¹⁴ But fundamentally the Monroe doctrine for Africa was doomed by the fact that the British were attempting to proclaim what they could not enforce. New powers had appeared on the scene which would not step meekly aside. By 1878 even British naval supremacy was under challenge, by 1882 the combined French and German navies had more first class ships than the British.¹⁵ The British claim to exclusive informal sway in Africa, to power without responsibility, seemed to other powers merely a dog-in-the-manger response. It thus merely intensified the will to challenge Britain's informal sway.

Under Gladstone's Liberal government of 1880-5 the entire house of cards collapsed, under a government firmly wedded to free trade principles, the uselessness of colonial annexations in Africa, and the need to curb financial spending overseas. Britain's ability to preserve her informal sway collapsed as the hollowness of her pretensions were increasingly revealed by a series of disasters. Client states showed themselves to be men of straw. Egypt was already bankrupt. Gladstone in opposition had fiercely resisted any suggestion that Britain should occupy Egypt to restore stability, anticipating Robinson and Gallagher by arguing that such an occupation would set off a domino process by which Britain, horrible to contemplate, would end up having to occupy Uganda, Kenya, and the East African coast and march on from Cairo to the Cape.¹⁶ Yet, faced with Arabi's revolt, the Liberal government blundered into occupying Egypt in 1882, while refusing to admit (even to themselves) that this was more than a temporary occupation, designed to 'restore the Khedive's authority'. The effect was to weaken Britain's international position even further, making her

¹² Carnarvon to Sir Bartle Frere, 12 Dec. 1876, cited in C. F. Goodfellow, *Great Britain and the South African Confederation*, Cape Town 1966, pp. 78-9 n.; see also W. D. McIntyre, *The Imperial Frontier in the Tropics*, London 1967, pp. 369-70, G. N. Sanderson, *Partition of Africa*, p. 22.

¹³ On the Gambia negotiations see J. D. Hargreaves, *Prelude to the Partition of West Africa*, London 1963, pp. 174-81.

¹⁴ Ethiopia was an obvious exception to this generalization. It is significant, however, that Britain failed to establish a paramount influence in Ethiopia, where relations fell to a nadir with the affair of the 'Abyssinian captives' and Napier's invasion of 1868. Ethiopia became a partitioner during the scramble for

African territory, and not one of its victims.

¹⁵ A. J. Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905*, London 1940, pp. 119-39 discusses this challenge.

¹⁶ W. E. Gladstone, 'Aggression on Egypt and Freedom in the East', in *Nineteenth Century*, Aug.-Dec. 1877, pp. 149-66. Gladstone argued that 'our first site in Egypt, be it by larceny or be it by emption, will be the almost certain egg of a North African Empire, that will grow and grow until another Victoria and another Albert, titles of the Lake-sources of the White Nile, come within our borders: and till we finally join hands across the Equator with Natal and Cape Town, to say nothing of the Transvaal and the Orange River on the South, or of Abyssinia or Zanzibar, to be swallowed by way of *viaticum* on our journey.'

vulnerable in Egypt to the continuing institutions of international debt control, and vulnerable in East Africa to foreign encroachment upon the vital Nile valley waterflows.

It was likewise clear by 1880 that the Sultan of Zanzibar could not hope to maintain a claim to exclusive control of the East African coast, let alone the hinterland. In South Africa the federation scheme fell to pieces when the Transvaal Boers rebelled and inflicted upon Britain the humiliation of defeat at Majuba. Yet the Liberal government persisted in the traditional policy of warning others off and trying to prop up or create comprador regimes. Other European powers increasingly saw this as both ridiculous and provocative. A British naval visit to Madagascar in July 1881, designed to reassure the Hova dynasty and to stimulate their ambition to unify the whole island, led directly to French naval action in February 1883, and ultimately to the French conquest of Madagascar.¹⁷

As yet, however, Britain had not provoked any combined challenge directed against her general claims to informal overlordship in Africa. Such a challenge emerged in response to British attempts to maintain informal control in two regions, the Congo and South West Africa. The two crises were interlinked. In the Congo the British, faced with increasing activity and treaty-making by France and King Leopold of the Belgians around the mouth of that great river, where British traders and missionaries had been paramount hitherto, responded by attempting to seal off the mouth by recognizing Portuguese sovereignty there in the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty signed in February 1884. Portugal was now to play the role of client state, guaranteeing free trade to British traders at no cost to Britain's taxpayers. By this time British attitudes on the question of South West Africa had thoroughly alienated Bismarck. Faced with an initial inquiry as to whether Britain would establish its authority over Angra Pequena in order to protect the activities of a German merchant, the British temporized, ignored Bismarck's requests, delayed, and then finally, in November 1883, officially replied that Britain did not intend to establish authority in Angra Pequena, but nevertheless would view any German attempt to do so as an unfriendly act. As Bismarck noted in the margin, this was the proclamation of a 'Monroe Doctrine for Africa'.¹⁸ British arrogance over South West Africa in November 1883, and the attempt to seal off the Congo mouth by the Treaty with Portugal in February 1884, gave the opportunity to Bismarck to deal the death blows to what remained of British informal paramouncy in Africa. This he began to do in the Spring of 1884.

First, Bismarck authorized the series of German annexations in Africa, each of which lay close to areas of British predominance. Lüderitz's establishments in South West Africa were placed under German protection in April 1884, Togo and Cameroon in July. On June 7 Bismarck refused to recognize the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty. Thereafter he began diplomatic efforts to persuade the French to join Germany in an assault on the whole notion of British paramouncy in Africa by

¹⁷ G. N. Sanderson, *Partition of Africa*, pp. 24-5.

¹⁸ H.-U. Wehler, *Bismarck und der Imperialismus*, Cologne 1969, pp. 264-81; W. O. Aydelotte, 'The First German Colony and its Diplomatic Consequences', in *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 5 (1937), pp. 291-313;

J. Lepsius, A. Mendelsohn-Bartholdy, F. Thimme (eds.), *Die Große Politik der europäischen Kabinette, 1871-1914: Sammlung der Diplomatischen Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes*, 40 vols., Berlin 1922-27, vol. 4, nos. 741-52.

challenging not only the Congo treaty, but also the British position of trading dominance on the Niger. By September the French had agreed to co-operate in the setting up of an international conference on West Africa (defined as the Congo and Niger regions) to take place in Berlin. Besides the questions of commerce and navigation on the Congo and Niger rivers, the conference would attempt to define how 'new occupations on the African coasts shall be deemed effective'.¹⁹ The peculiar interlude had come to an end and Britain's attempt to create a Monroe Doctrine for Africa lay in ruins.

THE BERLIN CONFERENCE AND THE CHARTERING OF THE ROYAL NIGER COMPANY

The events leading up to the Berlin Conference, and the Conference itself, finally convinced the British government that if anything was to be salvaged from the wreck of its traditional predominance in Africa, it would have to be done by some formal steps, announced to the powers, establishing British authority in legal manner. But neither government, Parliament, nor the Treasury believed in the efficacy of colonial rule as an instrument of economic penetration. The problem now was to devise expedients which would be accepted by other powers as evidence that British authority existed in a given territory, without establishing institutions of colonial rule or incurring expense. At the Conference itself the British delegates fought to reduce the definition of 'effective occupation' to as meaningless a minimum as possible, and to try to ensure that Britain, whilst salvaging a position on the Niger (the Congo being totally lost), was saddled with as little international supervision and actual responsibility as possible. Thanks to the increasing disagreement between Germany and France as the Conference proceeded, they did not do badly. The declaration on effective occupation applied only to new acquisitions on the coasts of Africa, and not to the interior. Powers making such acquisitions needed now only to notify other powers of such an act of acquisition, and assumed the obligation thereby to establish 'authority in the regions occupied by them on the coasts of the African Continent sufficient to protect existing rights, and, as the case may be, freedom of trade and of transit under the conditions agreed upon'.²⁰ On paper the Act of Navigation for the Niger contained a formidable list of obligations, free navigation for the ships of all nations without discrimination, no obligations for landing or compulsory entry into ports, no transit dues, the only taxes permitted being those for services to navigation itself. These limitations applied also to all affluents of the river and any subsequent roads, railways, or canals built to assist navigation. But the act lacked any teeth. No international commission was set up to ensure that its provisions were upheld.²¹

Paper obligations, nevertheless, had been incurred. The problem now was how to satisfy these obligations without colonial annexations or expense.

¹⁹ Plessen to Granville, 8 Oct. 1884, no. 10, *Parliamentary Papers*, C. 4205.

Articles 34 and 35.

²¹ *Ibid.*, ch. 5, Articles 26-33.

²⁰ General Act of the Berlin Conference, ch. 6.

An instrument in fact lay ready to hand. British traders on the lower Niger had, in 1879, amalgamated their efforts into a single company, the United African Company, under the unlikely leadership of Sir George Goldie, a slightly disreputable minor aristocrat who had ruined his social acceptability and prospects of public career by a scandalous marriage. The amalgamation under his leadership was designed to secure a monopoly, thus lowering prices paid for African produce. But as soon as this was instituted new competitors, including the French, were attracted to the market. Just as ruinous competition reasserted itself an event in far-away Borneo presented itself as the solution to Goldie's problems. This was the chartering, in 1881, of the British North Borneo Company by Gladstone's Liberal government, a piece of imperialism on the cheap designed to prevent either Spanish or Dutch control of the northern part of Borneo. The Borneo Company based its claim to exercise political power on concessions secured from local Muslim rulers, which granted monopolies of specific articles of trade. It also claimed that, if Britain did not grant a charter, it could, in international law, establish itself as a formal independent state. In granting the charter, therefore, the British government claimed that it was regularizing an awkward situation, gaining control over an otherwise independent entity which might even have placed itself under foreign protection. All this was revealed in published parliamentary papers which Goldie carefully studied.²²

In June 1882 Goldie reformed his company as the National African Company, with new articles of association which allowed the company to govern the region with which it traded, make treaties with African rulers and chiefs, and to apply for chartered status from the British or any foreign government. The board of directors was now strengthened by the inclusion of political figures who could gain access to government circles. The clear objective was to secure a monopoly of the Niger trade by political means, so that the company could become the government of the region and exclude its competitors from trade. The company now began making treaties with African rulers, who supposedly granted monopoly powers on the model of the Borneo Company's concessions. A bitter struggle began with French traders on the river, a rivalry which Goldie constantly drew to the attention of the British government, which in July 1884 appointed the company's chief agents as British unpaid Vice-Consul. By now it was clear that Britain's informal sway was collapsing. Consul Hewett, after long delays, had been authorized to secure protectorate treaties from the Niger to Cameroon, only to be forestalled in July by Nachtigal's treaties in Cameroon. Less well known is the fact that he was also forestalled by National African Company treaties on the Niger delta! Finally, on the eve of the Berlin Conference, Goldie, using his private fortune, succeeded in buying out the French competition so that Britain was alone on the river. A grateful government now gave permission for the company to fly the Union Jack at all places where it held 'independent title'.²³ Goldie's company was sliding into a position where it appeared to be the sole evidence for British 'effective occupation' of the lower Niger.

²² PP 1881, LXXXI, *Papers Relating to Affairs to Sulu, George Goldie*, pp. 41-3.
etc. For Goldie's reaction to the documents, see Flint, *Sir*

²³ Flint, *Sir George Goldie*, pp. 67-8.

It was fitting, therefore, that Goldie should attend the Berlin Conference as an unofficial adviser to the British delegation.²⁴ Once the Conference was over and the Foreign Office began to contemplate the problem of how to fulfil its new obligations under the Niger Navigation Act, it seemed almost inevitable that Goldie's ambitions would be realized. That he would use such powers to enforce a monopoly, and pervert every clause of the Niger Navigation Act to keep competitors out, was common knowledge. But what was the alternative? The colonial office was not willing to establish a formal government over the Niger and it was even less likely that the Treasury would pay for a protectorate regime run by consular staff.²⁵ Even before the Berlin Conference began one official was arguing that Goldie's company should be granted a charter.²⁶ Germany, which had set up chartered regimes in South West Africa and East Africa could not argue that this was not 'effective occupation'. As soon as the terms of the Niger Navigation Act were known, T. V. Lister, a senior official of the Foreign Office, circulated a memorandum to the Cabinet pointing out Britain's new obligations, assuming that the Cabinet would not wish to 'go to the great expense of setting up the machinery of government' on the Niger, and arguing that the best course was to formalize the present dominant position of the National African Company by granting it a royal charter giving power to rule its territories.²⁷

The charter was not, in fact, granted until July 1886, by which time Gladstone's government had fallen, giving way to the Conservatives under Lord Salisbury. The delay was due largely to Goldie's intransigence. He was determined that the company should in no way be controlled by the government, and fought long, and in the end successfully, to prevent any direct government control over the company's officials, their appointment or dismissal, or over regulations and ordinances made by the company, or over its levying of customs duties, taxes, or licences. All these were essential if the company was to establish a tight monopoly, which for Goldie and the traders was the purpose of the charter. Without such powers they would rather have no charter at all. In all this the government had no cards to play, for the only threat which would have impressed Goldie was the threat to establish a direct administration paid for by the taxpayers. This, Goldie well knew, the Cabinet would not sanction.²⁸ So in the end Goldie obtained virtually all the powers he had asked for, and the government none except the hypothetical possibility of cancelling the charter, which of course still presupposed a willingness to establish a direct British administration. Even this, however, was an unloaded weapon, for the charter did not incorporate the company, nor grant it rights to govern Africans. The company was already incorporated, and would stay so if it lost its charter, while the charter merely recognized the company's sovereign rights, which were seen to have come from its treaties with Africans. What then had the British government gained by the charter? Only one thing; it could now be claimed that an administration existed for the Niger and that Britain's occupation

²⁴ Other advisers of this type included two representatives of the British West African steamship lines and three other British West African traders.

²⁵ This had been revealed beyond doubt by protracted discussions from 1882-4 concerning the outfitting and financial provision for Consul Hewett's treaty-making in

the Oil Rivers.

²⁶ FO 84/1813, memo by H. P. Anderson, 14 Oct. 84.

²⁷ FO 84/1879, memo by Lister, 30 Jan. 85.

²⁸ I have examined this process of negotiation in: Flint, *Sir George Goldie*, pp. 71-85.

was 'effective'. And all this would cost not one penny to the Treasury or the British taxpayer.

In this way free trading, anti-expansionist governments, both Liberal and Conservative, revived the mercantilist instrument of the chartered company to govern African territory. And in the case of the Royal Niger Company, as Goldie now renamed the business (without obtaining royal permission to do so), mercantilism was what they got. From 1886 until its demise in 1900, the company established a complete and effective monopoly by manipulating its regulations, licences, and taxes, excluding all competitors from the Niger, whether British, German, French, or African. This was indeed a paradoxical outcome to the Berlin Conference, as ironic in its way as the outcome in King Leopold's Congo, though admittedly not so bloody.

Finance capital had played no part in these events, nor would it inject itself in the affairs of the Royal Niger Company thereafter. Goldie and his fellow directors were of course capitalists, but merchant capitalists, uninterested in investment in Nigeria greater than that of supplying the wharves and stations for their trade. They were not even 'free traders', and their attitudes were closer to those of the eighteenth than the nineteenth century.

Nor were financiers conspicuous in the group which eventually succeeded in obtaining the second British charter to rule territory in East Africa in 1888. The common elements in this group were protestant evangelicalism and missionary connections, interest, or experience in India, and anti-slavery attitudes. Their 'leader', Sir William Mackinnon, was utterly unlike Goldie. He was a fanatical Presbyterian Scot and a capitalist, though not a financier, whose business interest in the whole scheme lay in the fact that he ran the British India Steam Navigation Company, which carried freight and mails from Bombay to Zanzibar. There were no real traders in the company, and indeed, little trade to do in East Africa. Unlike the Niger Company, it is not possible to analyse the economic or commercial motives of the East African group in any rational way. The eventual bankruptcy of the company was implicit in the totally unbusinesslike way in which it was formed, and in the absence of any practical economic or commercial goals.²⁹

In contrast to Goldie's Niger interests, the East African group was manipulated by the British government, and not vice versa. Mackinnon's scheme to try to take over the mainland coast under concessions from the Sultan of Zanzibar was sabotaged in 1879 by Lord Salisbury, who could see no reason why Britain should become politically involved in the region.³⁰ Mackinnon and his friends, who, like Goldie, were inspired by the British North Borneo Company's charter in 1881 to seek similar powers from the British government, made no progress for several years, despite Germany's irruption into East Africa and the chartering of Karl Peters's company for German East Africa in March 1885. Nothing was done to save the Sultan of Zanzibar's crumbling claims on the East African mainland. After the Berlin Conference Britain had at least learned the lesson that Germany must not be antagonized in matters African. By the autumn of 1886 Britain and Germany had agreed to demarcate 'spheres of influence' from the coast to Lake Victoria under a process which, in effect, allowed the Germans to take what territory they wished, in return for allowing a

²⁹ The best study of the Imperial British East Africa Co. is that by John S. Galbraith, *Mackinnon and East Africa, 1878-1895*, Cambridge 1972, from which details are drawn.

³⁰ For details see Galbraith, *Mackinnon*, pp. 29-70.

reserved sphere in Kenya from which the British might try to salvage what was left of British informal sway and Zanzibar claims.³¹

Britain now had an acknowledged 'sphere of interest', to the rear of which lay Buganda and the headwaters of the Nile. Salisbury's government had no intention of spending money to establish an East African administration, still less of financing expeditions to Buganda to forestall Germany, France, or King Leopold there. Now Mackinnon's ambitions for a chartered company needed to be revived, and revived they were by official prodding on the part of Consul Holmwood in Zanzibar, who began also to press the Sultan to cede what was left of his mainland rights to Mackinnon's group. The concessions were secured, capital raised on the London market, and a petition for a charter submitted in March 1888. It was granted in September; the delay was mainly because Mackinnon needed assurances that he would be granted renewal of his steamship company's postal subsidy. It was a small price to pay for the creation of a formal British 'administration' in East Africa.³² The company was already engaged in the race for Buganda, which would rapidly exhaust its capital resources in expenditures for British imperial and strategic purposes which held out no prospect of eventual profit.

THE BRITISH SOUTH AFRICA COMPANY

A year after Mackinnon's Imperial British East Africa company was chartered and propelled towards its inevitable bankruptcy, the British government issued the last, and most lasting, of the African charters to Cecil Rhodes's British South Africa Company. Clearly this organization approximates closest of the three British African chartered companies to the model of financiers naked and rampant. Lord Rothschild was closely associated with the enterprise. George Cawston and Lord Gifford, originally Rhodes's rivals and the first to request a charter for the region, had close connections to the financial and banking interests of the City of London. When these amalgamated with Cecil Rhodes, controller of the world's diamond supply as head of De Beers and a powerful figure in gold mining through his holdings in Consolidated Goldfields, they created a combination of financial power such as was entirely lacking in the Niger and East Africa companies.³³

Nevertheless, if we ask the question why Rhodes was able to secure the charter under which his company would eventually colonize Rhodesia, it becomes clear from the documentary evidence that the answer is not that Rhodes had amassed such financial power but that his political influence in London had become irresistible. On the contrary, the evidence demonstrates that had the British government had the will to establish a direct administration to secure 'the road to the North', Rhodes would not have had his way. But British public opinion, Parliament, the Treasury, and the Cabinet were no more eager in 1889 to undertake new responsibilities and costs in

³¹ Anglo-German Agreement of Oct.-Nov. 1886 in Sir E. Hertslet, *The Map of Africa by Treaty*, 3 vols., London 1909, 3rd edn., vol. 3, pp. 882-6.

³² Galbraith, *Mackinnon*, ch. 5 is a detailed account of the negotiations for the charter.

³³ For details see J. S. Galbraith, *Crown and Charter: The Early Years of the British South Africa Company*, Berkeley 1974, chs. 2 and 3; John Flint, *Cecil Rhodes*, Boston 1974, pp. 77-113.

Africa than they had been in 1884. In fact it was British government intervention and prodding, as much as Rhodes's ambitions, which secured the granting of the charter in 1889.

At the end of 1888, while agents of the Cawston-Gifford group and those of Cecil Rhodes's were engaged in an unedifying scramble for concessions from King Lobengula of the Matabele, Cawston and Gifford formally asked for a charter from the Colonial Office. Junior officials were scornful of the idea, but the Colonial Secretary, Lord Knutsford, smarting under the costs incurred in Bechuanaland and fearful that Britain would have to intervene further north to protect her interests against Boer, Portuguese, and even perhaps German incursions, jumped eagerly on the proposal for passing the costs over to private interests. Cawston and Gifford's finances were not as strong as Knutsford might have wished, so they were told that prospects for the granting of the charter would be enormously enhanced if they could secure amalgamation with Rhodes. With his hint the two sides came together rapidly, amalgamating their interests in complex financial mergers during the summer of 1889.³⁴

The former rivals asked officially for a charter on 30 April 1889, after Rhodes and Gifford held a series of meetings with Lord Knutsford, at which the Colonial Secretary gave them a short course on how to secure a charter. Though the charter was not issued for another six months, the delay was in no way an indication of government reluctance to grant it. Rather it was a period in which the Colonial and Foreign Offices revealed to Rhodes the political difficulties which had to be overcome, advised him on ways to do so, and encouraged him to expand his activities far beyond Ndebeleland into the Zambezi and Nyasaland areas, where he could do yeoman service in protecting and extending British interests at no cost to the taxpayer or the time of Parliament. Rhodes was also asked to give guarantees that he would begin extensive railway building north from the Cape system into Bechuanaland and on to his new possessions in the hope that this would bring economic development and revenues to Bechuanaland and reduce or bring to an end Parliament grants. In May Rhodes was even induced to pay an annual subsidy to the Foreign Office protectorate in Nyasaland, which was pitifully strapped for funds.

During the summer Rhodes did as he had been advised to deal with potential opposition. Powerful humanitarian figures, and even members of the Royal Family, were brought on to the company's board to add respectability to the enterprise. Newspaper proprietors and correspondents were won over. By the end of October the way was clear, and the charter issued formally in the Queen's name.³⁵

The late-Victorian revival of British chartered companies of colonization cannot be explained as an institutional superstructure for a 'new' imperialism rooted in economic change in Britain. In their economic motivations, the Niger, East Africa, and South Africa companies displayed almost nothing in common, their leaders were not similar personalities or representative of similar economic interest groups, and they made or lost money in totally distinct forms of economic activity. What makes them similar and comparable is the political and international setting in which they arose, and their

³⁴ Galbraith, *Crown and Charter*, pp. 79-86. The fullest and most recent treatment of the formation of the BSAC is in A. Keppel-Jones, *Rhodes and Rhodesia: The White*

Conquest of Zimbabwe, 1884-1902, Kingston 1983, pp. 103-50.

³⁵ Flint, *Cecil Rhodes*, pp. 110-17.

common denominator was the British government's desire to protect areas of traditional British informal sway at no cost to the taxpayer and with minimal political commitment, after the Berlin Conference had destroyed Britain's policy of attempting to seal off Africa on the Latin American model.

Christian Missionary Activities in Africa in the Age of Imperialism and the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885*

HORST GRÜNDER

For centuries Christian missionary work and European colonial conquest were closely related.¹ Their interlocking relationship underlines with particular clarity the continuity and unity of Western colonial history. This connection existed in the modern history of Black Africa as well as elsewhere. Long before the 'scramble' itself began, missionaries had followed explorers, traders and merchants, while mission stations, for their part, had advanced trading relations. As a result, the new age of exploration that began in the 1860s, especially in the interior of Africa, gave a strong impetus to missionary activity. The accounts of explorers and travellers provided missions with some of their most popular reading matter and stimulated the 'strategic' plans of their governing boards.

The Protestant world, in particular, took as its model the researcher, ethnographer, and missionary, David Livingstone (1813-73), who had developed a programme of 'Commerce and Christianity' for Africa. Groves, for example, saw him as 'a martyr of imposing stature'.² His life and writings had great influence on a wide religious public and his expeditions into Eastern and Central Africa transformed him from an unknown member of the London Missionary Society into a national hero.³ His maxim that the most important instruments for 'pacifying' and 'developing' Africa were 'legitimate' trade and Christianity determined the thinking and behaviour of missionary circles for decades. It should not be forgotten that humanitarian idealism, philanthropism, and 'free' trade were all products of the political and economic interests of those classes which had been emancipated by the industrial revolution and the French Revolution. Thus the various humanitarian impulses of the middle classes

* Translated by Robert Knight.

¹ H. Gründer, 'Christianisierung und Kolonialismus: Bemerkungen zur Rolle der Religion im westlichen Expansionismus der Neuzeit', in *Zeitschrift für Kulturaustausch*, 34 (1984), pp. 257-66; id., 'Kolonialpolitik und christliche Mission im Zeitalter des Imperialismus: Entwicklungslinien und Forschungsperspektiven', in *Jahrbuch der historischen Forschung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Report for 1983, Munich 1984, pp. 33-40. I am grateful to the German Historical Institute London and its former Director, Prof. W. J. Mommsen for the opportunity of archival research in Rome and Paris.

² C. P. Groves, 'Missionary and Humanitarian Aspects of Imperialism from 1870 to 1914', in: L. H. Gann and P. Duignan (eds.), *Colonialism in Africa*

1870-1960, 5 vols., Cambridge 1969-75, vol. 1: *The History and Politics of Colonialism, 1870-1914*, pp. 462-97, here p. 470.

³ H. A. C. Cairns, *Prelude to Imperialism: British Reactions to Central African Society, 1840-1890*, London 1965, p. 7; see also D. Lagergren, *Mission and State in the Congo: A Study of the Relations between Protestant Missions and the Congo Independent State Authorities with Special Reference to the Equator District, 1885-1903*, Uppsala 1970, p. 16; for the practical repercussions of Livingstone's programme see J. McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi, 1875-1940: The Impact of the Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Province*, Cambridge 1977, pp. 34-56.

(in the anti-slavery movement, for example) more or less accorded with their socio-economic interests.⁴ Since the end of the eighteenth century these humanitarian impulses had spread widely among the British middle classes and had led to the establishment of the modern (Protestant) missionary movement. The new missionary movement that, early in the nineteenth century, spread to Continental Pietism and to North America, was therefore clearly connected with the free trade expansionism of early European imperialism.⁵ Hence the newly formed missionary associations and missionary societies not only pointed to a religious revival; they also highlighted the transition from a bureaucratic-hierarchical to a constitutional liberal state. As forms of social organization bearing the hallmark of bourgeois individualism, these missionary societies were an early expression of liberal emancipation and social modernization. At the same time their financial independence and organizational autonomy allowed them to loosen the bonds of direct dependence on the state characteristic of Spanish and Portuguese missionary activity. This enabled British missionary societies to act as independent 'partners' in the 'exploration' and 'civilization' of Africa and other parts of the world.

Livingstone also gave the first major impetus to missionary activity, especially in East and Central Africa. In West Africa, by contrast, missionary activity had stagnated. It had spread beyond the coastal areas only in a few exceptional cases.⁶ In the Lower Congo international trading activity was restricted to the mouth of the Congo and Protestant missionaries were wholly absent.

With the arrival of Stanley in the Lower Congo in August 1877 all this changed almost at a stroke. Once the American explorer had shown that Africa's interior was accessible via the Congo, within a matter of years West Africa and the Congo became the focal-point of the 'scramble for Africa'. The publication of Stanley's *Journey of the Dark Continent* in 1878 also encouraged missionary activity. No less than four groups (the Baptist Missionary Society, the Livingstone Inland Mission, the Spiritans, and the White Fathers) directly followed Stanley into the 'heart of Africa'. This had two results: on the one hand European trading interests and the political ambitions of the 'men on the spot' triggered off a race to stake claims to spheres of influence and territory in Africa's interior. On the other hand, missionaries began to push out from their coastal stations and peripheral zones into the interior.

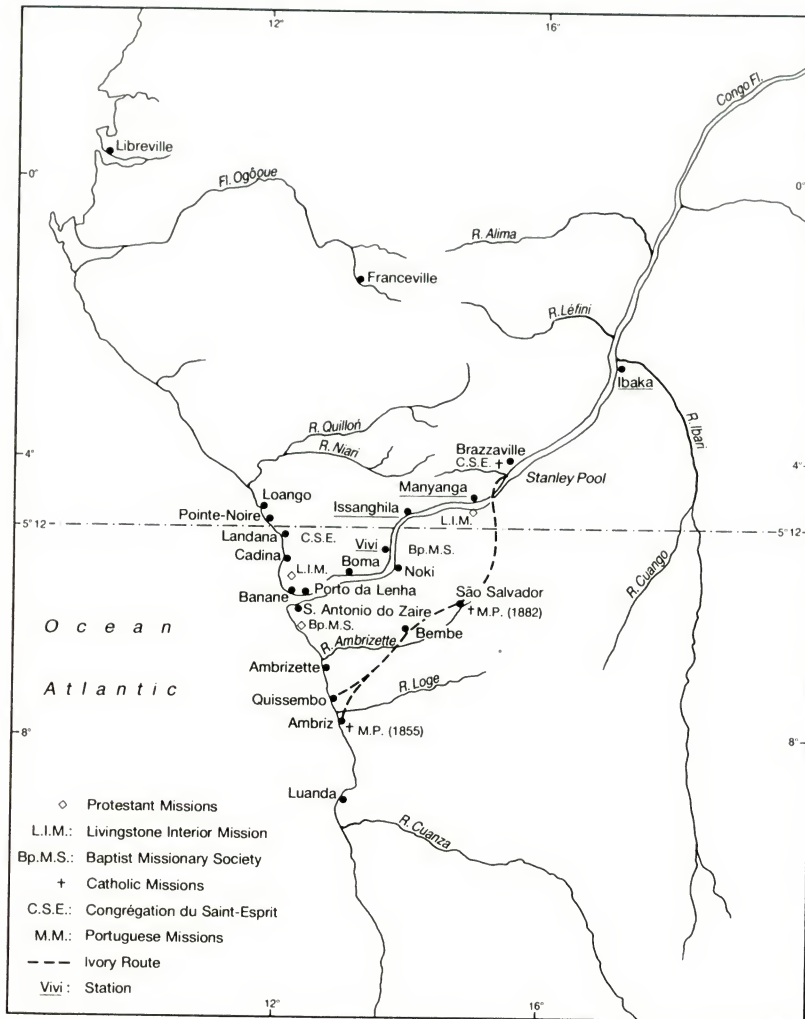
Up to this time missionary activity—like colonization and trade—had been largely restricted to offshore islands and coastal strips. Since 1483 Catholic missions had been active in the 'Kingdom' of the Congo, under the aegis of the Portuguese *padroado*,

⁴ See R. Hoffman, 'Zur missionarischen Aktivität der christlichen Kirchen seit dem Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts', in *Zeitgeschichte*, 1 (1974), pp. 133-45; id., 'Die neupietistische Missionsbewegung vor dem Hintergrund des sozialen Wandels um 1800', in *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, 59 (1977), pp. 445-70; S. Jacobsen, *Am I not a Man and a Brother? British Missions and the Abolition of the Slave Trade and Slavery in West-Africa and the West-Indies, 1786-1838*, Uppsala 1972; C. Bolt and S. Drescher (eds.), *Anti-Slavery, Religion and Reform: Essays in Memory of Roger Anstey*, Kent-Hamden, Conn. 1980.

⁵ See B. Stanley, 'Commerce and Christianity' Providence Theory, the Missionary Movement and the Imperialism of Free Trade, 1842-1860', in *Historical*

Journal, 26 (1983), pp. 71-94; A. Porter, 'Commerce and Christianity': The Rise and Fall of a Nineteenth-Century Missionary Slogan', in *Historical Journal*, 28 (1985), pp. 597-621.

⁶ See R. Oliver, *The Missionary Factor in East Africa*, London 1965, 2nd edn.; J. F. A. Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891: The Making of a New Elite*, London 1965, esp. pp. 233-5; E. A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842-1914: A Political and Social Analysis*, London 1971, 2nd edn.; G. O. M. Tasie, *Christian Missionary Enterprise in the Niger Delta, 1864-1918*, Leiden 1978; more generally L. Sanneh, *West African Christianity: The Religious Impact*, London 1983.



MAP 5.1. Missionary Activities at the Lower Congo before 1885

Source: Françoise Latour da Veiga Pinto, *Le Portugal et le Congo au XIX^e siècle*, Paris 1972, p. 76. (This map is printed by kind permission of the *Fondation Calouste Gulbenkian Centre Culturel Portugais*, Paris.)

initially with some success.⁷ But Portugal's main interest was in the slave trade. Even the missionaries participated in this trade in order to secure their material base, and missionary activity was soon subordinated to this predominant concern as well as to the indifference of the Portuguese to real missionary work. In the event perhaps the Congo's lack of valuable metals and spices saved it from a worse fate than that of being pillaged for slaves. Even before Stanley, Portuguese Jesuits (after 1547) and Italian Capuchin Friars (after 1645) had advanced close to what Stanley later called the

⁷ A. Hilton, *The Kingdom of Congo*, Oxford 1985; see also S. Axelson, *Culture Confrontation in the Lower Congo: From the Old Kongo Kingdom to the Congo Independent State*

with Special Reference to the Swedish Missionaries in the 1880s and 1890s, Falköping 1970.

'Pool'—the point where the Congo broadens out into a 450 square kilometre lake. They attempted to continue their work in the Kingdom of the Congo but failed because of external difficulties, the indifference of the Portuguese government and their own lack of funds. In addition, the Apostolic Prefects of the old Congo mission followed the Portuguese bishops of Angola who, by 1716, had transferred their seat from San Salvador (Mbanza Congo) to St Paul de Loanda, thereby shifting the focus of European activity towards the Atlantic coast. By the beginning of the nineteenth century virtually nothing remained in West Africa of the Catholic missionary work of the early modern period.

In any case, the Catholic missionary movement had reached a nadir by the turn of the nineteenth century. The Enlightenment and the French Revolution had been hostile to the movement, and it had also suffered heavily from material losses as a result of secularization. The negligible scale of missionary activity in West Africa meant that in the first half of the nineteenth century Catholic missionary planning, which was limited to the coastal areas, had to adopt a large scale approach, as is shown by the definition of the Apostolic Vicarate as covering 'Sierra Leone and the two Guineas'. In 1841 this missionary area had been assigned by Rome to Edward Barron, an American priest working first in Liberia and then in Gabon (Libreville). It covered the whole West African coast from Senegal to the Orange River and, apart from the Bishopric of Angola and the Apostolic Prefecture of Angola-Congo, had no boundaries in the hinterland. In 1845 this Vicarate was transferred from the Propaganda Fide, the missionary headquarters in Rome, to the *Pères du St. Esprit* (Spiritans). Since 1852 this French missionary society had also been officially in charge of the *Séminaire Colonial* in Paris, which was responsible for training French clergy for the colonies. When it also took over the Congo Mission (covering roughly modern Angola) from the Capuchins in 1865 the missionaries believed they were close to achieving their real goal—the breakthrough into the interior. However, opposition from the Portuguese, who jealously guarded their ancient political and papal *padroado* privileges granted in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries by the popes in Rome, forced the missionaries to give up after their first attempts to establish themselves in Ambriz, Mossamedes, and Luanda. Not until 1873, when they succeeded in establishing a settlement in Landana, north of the mouth of the Congo, were they finally able to start work.⁸

From this position they closely followed the expeditions to Ogowe and the lower Congo and themselves explored the River Zaire as far as Noki and Vivi. After two expeditions Boma was selected as the base for a mission into the interior, and both river banks were occupied, one by a post at Nemlao-Banana and the other by the re-establishment of an abandoned Portuguese missionary station at San Antonio. In September 1876, while Stanley was still working his way down the Congo towards the coast, the Belgian King Leopold II convened an international commission, the *Association*

⁸ A. Roeykens, 'Les Pères du Saint-Esprit et l'acception de la Mission du Congo au XIX^e siècle', in *Aequatoria*, 13 (1950), pp. 67-72 and 93-100; on Catholic missionary activity in West and Central Africa see also M. Storme, *Evangelisatiepogingen in de Binnenlanden van Afrika gedurende de XIX^e eeuw*, Brussels 1951; id., 'La pénétration missionnaire en Afrique équatoriale', in *Studia Missionalia VII*, Rome 1952, pp. 297-335; P. F.

Moody, 'The Growth of Catholic Missions in Western, Central and Eastern Africa', in J. Metzler (ed.), *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide Memoria Rerum*, 3 vols., Rome-Freiburg-Vienna 1971-6, vol. 3/1: 1815-1972, 1975, pp. 203-55; M. Storme, 'Engagement de la propagande pour l'organisation territoriale des missions au Congo', in Metzler *ibid.*, pp. 256-94.

Internationale Africaine (AIA). In Landana the news of the Brussels Conference was greeted with wholehearted enthusiasm and optimistic expectations.⁹ But behind Leopold's initiative lay his search of colonies, which was aimed at satisfying his strong desire for international recognition and personal enrichment. Initially, like the missionaries, he had thought in terms of East Africa, but since the mid-1870s his interest had become firmly focused on West Africa. At the start, however, the Belgian king cleverly masked his real aims behind the geographical and scientific interest in Africa, which had by now become widespread.¹⁰

The French bishop Charles Martial Allemand Lavigerie (1825–92), probably the most important Catholic missionary leader and Church politician of the time,¹¹ by contrast, reacted less with enthusiasm than with a high degree of activity. One year after becoming archbishop of Algiers in 1867 he had founded the missionary society of the 'White Fathers'. His wide-ranging missionary strategy was to encircle Muslim Central Africa in a pincer-movement from the north. Muslim religious and cultural resistance, however, forced this encompassing movement to depend on strengthened flanks in the east and west of the continent. Yet the reports of Livingstone, Burton, Speke, Stanley, and Cameron had originally pointed Lavigerie, like other Catholics, towards East Africa. But above all they were driven by the determination not to be overtaken by the Protestants.

To Lavigerie, however, the 1876 Brussels Conference seemed to pose an even greater threat to the Catholic Church and its Mission. On 2 January 1878 he sent a fifty-five page 'Mémoire secret' to Cardinal Franchi, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. In this document, which was later to become famous, he outlined the projected aims of the AIA—'l'exploration et la conquête de l'immense continent africain' ('Mémoire', p. 4). This he saw as the work of 'Lutherans, Calvinists, Free Thinkers, Britons, Germans, Americans, French . . .'. At the same time he believed that the Catholic Church and the Holy See had a unique chance to take up the 'cause' which he described as 'l'une des plus importantes des temps actuels' ('Mémoire', p. 3). He concluded:

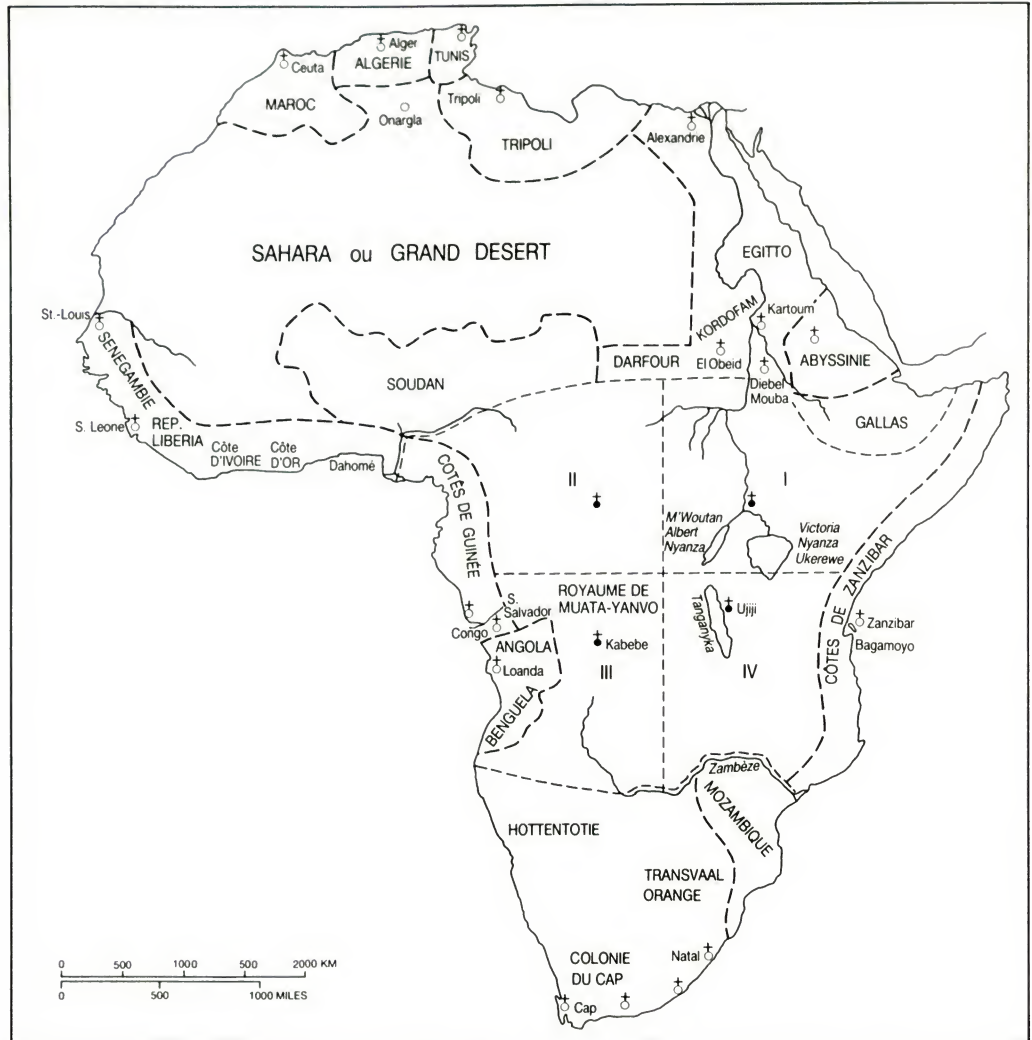
Une bulle Pontificale adressée aux chefs des missions de l'Afrique équatoriale qui annoncerait cette grande croisade de foi et d'humanité, qui en réclamerait l'honneur pour l'Église, qui annoncerait pour la réaliser la création d'une armée d'apôtres qui marcherait à la mort pour sauver la vie, la liberté des pauvres fils de Cham [!], serait l'une des plus grandes choses de ce siècle et même de toute l'histoire de l'Église. ('Mémoire', p. 54)¹²

⁹ M. Storme, 'La Pénétration missionnaire', pp. 300, 308.

¹⁰ A. Roeykens, *Léopold II et l'Afrique, 1855–1880: Essai de synthèse et de mise au point*, Brussels 1958; D. Lagergren, *Mission and State*, pp. 25–31 and Jean Stengers' contribution to this volume.

¹¹ L. P. A. Baunard, *Le Cardinal Lavigerie*, 2 vols., Paris 1896; J. Perraudin, *Le Cardinal Lavigerie et Léopold II*, Rome 1959; J. K. Rivinus, 'Wettlauf nach Afrika: Dargestellt am Leben und Werk Lavigeries', in H. Fries, F. Köster, F. Wollinger (eds.), *Warum Mission? Theologische Motive in der Missionsgeschichte der Neuzeit*, 2 vols., St Ottilien 1984, vol. 1: Geschichte—Gestalten—Modelle, pp. 169–261.

¹² M. Storme, *Rapports du Père Planque, de Mgr. Lavigerie et de Mgr. Comboni sur l'Association Internationale Africaine*, Brussels 1957, pp. 75–137 (with the original pagination of Lavigerie's *mémoire secret*); on his 'crusade plan'—armed auxiliaries were to accompany the missionaries—see Ch. Lavigerie, 'Petit Règlement pour les Auxiliaires armés qui accompagnent les Missionnaires d'Alger dans l'Afrique équatoriale', in A. Roeykens, *La Politique religieuse de l'État Indépendent du Congo: Documents*, vol. 1: Léopold II, le Saint-Siège et les Missions catholiques dans l'Afrique Equatoriale, 1876–1885, Brussels 1965, no. 189; F. Renault, *Lavigerie, l'esclavage africain et l'Europe, 1868–1892*, 2 vols., Paris 1971; H. Gründer,



MAP 5.2. Lavigerie's Map of Africa

Source: Revd Father Marcel Storme, *Rapports du Père Planque, de Mgr Lavigerie et de Mgr Comboni sur l'Association Internationale Africaine*, Brussels 1957, p. 31. (This map is printed by kind permission of the Académie Royale des Sciences d'Outre Mer, Brussels.)

Lavigerie's ecclesiastical intentions—the founding of a 'Christian Kingdom' in the heart of Africa ruled by an African 'Constantine'¹³—did not, however, exclude nationalist aims altogether. He had always considered his policy and the activities of his missionaries as contributing to the 'gloire de la France'. Early in 1880, for example, after his missionaries had set out for the Central African lakes, he assured the French

' "Gott will es"—eine Antisklavereibewegung am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts', in *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, 28 (1977), pp. 210-24.

¹³ Card. Lavigerie, *Instructions aux missionnaires*, Namur 1950, pp. 112-14; see also Baunard, *Le Cardinal Lavigerie*, vol. 2, pp. 69-70.

Foreign Minister, Freycinet, that in addition to their religious and civilizing work they would naturally also serve 'the interests and honour of their fatherland'. Before this he had personally pointed out to the Director of the Political Department, Desprez, that France should prepare to defend its influence and 'legitimate rights' in the face of Belgian, Italian, and British action in the African interior.¹⁴ Even so he always attempted to assert the 'primacy of religion' over politics.¹⁵

The direct result of the 'Mémoire secret' of January was that on 24 February 1878 Lavigerie was virtually made an 'apostolic delegate for Equatorial Africa'. Having thus received Rome's backing for his African plans he began at once to deploy his missionaries in East Africa. Initially, two groups of 'White Fathers' set out from Tabora, one going towards the south end of Victoria and Buganda, the other towards Tanganyika. As early as 27 September 1880 Leo XIII divided these missions into two separate provicarates (Victoria-Nyanza and Tanganyika). At the same time his society was formally assigned two missionary areas in the Congo. Together they encompassed an area of approximately 6.25 million square kilometres and covered roughly the whole area from the Atlantic to the Stanley Pool ('Congo septentrional') and the area between the Stanley Pool and the Kwango and along this river ('Congo méridional'). Six years later these areas were transferred to mission of Scheut and the Spiritans.

However, by establishing the provicarate of the 'White Fathers' on the Nyanza and on the Tanganyika, Lavigerie cut off the Spiritans' Zanzibar mission from the hinterland, thus thwarting the secret aim of this other 'French' mission gradually to advance from the east in order, at the end, to link up with their brothers in the west. Lavigerie's reorganization of the Catholic Missions in Africa and the missionaries' activities in advancing from the east towards the Congo also dealt a blow to the plans of Daniel Comboni, the missionary priest of the Mazza Institute in Verona, who wanted to push southwards through the Sudan towards the Congo.¹⁶ Comboni (1831-81) had been appointed Apostolic Vicar for 'Central Africa' on 31 July 1877. Since 1864 he had been pursuing his plans for the 'Evangelizing of Africa by the Africans' in the vicarate, established in 1846, which was bounded to the south by the legendary 'Mountains of the Moon'. Comboni intended to push through the Nile basin towards the Congo and, in doing so, to take advantage of the conquests of Anglo-Egyptian forces. When Gordon offered to transport English missionaries who wished to go up the Nile to Victoria free of charge, Comboni's plan to establish a mission at Lake Albert assumed greater urgency. Rome, however, put a stop to his activities because of Lavigerie's schemes. Comboni, meanwhile, had also received an offer of help from Father Auguste

¹⁴ Lavigerie to Freycinet, 17 Feb. 1880, and also 18 Jan. 1880, Archivio Generale dei Padri Bianchi Roma (AGPB): C 10-169 and C 10-168.

¹⁵ See also Lavigerie's instructions to his missionaries about to leave for Equatorial Africa on 29 June 1880 (extracts of which can be found in R. X. Lamey, 'Cardinal Lavigerie and the Berlin Conference, 1884-1885, in *Petit Echo (des Pères Blancs)*, no. 758, Rome 1985, p. 164; also Lavigerie to Leopold, 29 Dec. 1882, AGPB. A 11-159; on the (good) co-operation on the ground between Lavigerie's missionaries and the AIA, see R. Heremans, *Les établissements de l'Association Internationale Africaine au Lac Tanganyika et les Pères Blancs*:

Mpala et Karema, 1877-1885, Musée Royale de l'Afrique Centrale, Tervuren 1966, here pp. 122-4.

¹⁶ See Moody, 'The Growth of Catholic Missions', pp. 212-21, 221-2, 227-9. Like all the other missionary leaders Comboni followed the explorations of his time very closely and himself wrote a book about the expeditions in Africa: D. Comboni, *Quadro storico delle scoperte africane*, Verona 1880. On the general problem of canon law, the drawing of the Congo's boundaries and its political background see J. I. Nikulu, 'La Question des juridictions religieuses au Congo et ses implications politiques, 1865-1888', Ph.D. Gregorian Pontifical University, Faculty of Church History, Rome 1974.

Planque, General of the *Société des Missions Africaines de Lyon*. As a result Comboni placed all the more hope in the initiatives of the Belgian king.¹⁷

The main hope which the Catholic missions and the Holy See had of the Brussels Conference, therefore, was that the initiative of Catholic Leopold would promote the evangelization as much as the exploration of the 'dark' continent, and that this process would take place under a Catholic banner.¹⁸ Meanwhile, in April 1878, Lavigerie, too, had offered Leopold his support and declared himself ready to recruit Belgian missionaries for his society. His suspicion that the Brussels enterprise was a 'Protestant' and 'free-thinking' affair and that the whole Conference was drifting in the wake of a 'liberalistic' laicism could not be sustained anyway. Indeed, the majority of the participants were convinced that the spread of the Gospel 'could become the prime factor in the moral regeneration of the peoples of Africa'.¹⁹

Leopold II, too, who initially succeeded in concealing his colonial ambitions behind the mask of an enquiring geographer, was well aware that the missions could promote not only the aim of discovering and 'civilizing' Africa but also his own secret goals. It is true that he would have preferred to see Belgian Catholic missionaries active in the Congo. Immediately after the Brussels Conference therefore he went in person to Scheut in order to win over the *Congrégation missionnaire belge du Coeur Immaculé de Marie* (founded in 1862) for a commitment in the Congo.²⁰ But this missionary society was still too weak in numbers to follow the king's wishes and, in addition, had just started work in Mongolia. It was only after the establishment of the Congo State that Leopold finally managed to persuade Belgian 'Colonial missionaries' to go to the Congo and he soon started to favour the Catholic missions more or less openly. In the end, after the public campaigns against atrocities in the Congo which, together with the destructive exploitation of rubber, had aroused European public opinion since the mid-1890s, Leopold tried to force out the Protestant missionaries, who had shared in the condemnation of the 'Leopoldian regime'.²¹ The result was a predominance of Catholics in the Congo which has lasted until the present day—while 46 per cent of the total population of Zaire are Christian, 35 per cent of the total population are Catholic.

Initially, however, Leopold had to secure the co-operation of all the missionary groups. This was especially important in view of the persistent anticolonial attitude of

¹⁷ On 30 June 1878 he wrote to him: 'C'est Votre Majesté qui a inauguré une ère nouvelle pour la régénération des peuples les plus malheureux et les plus délaissés de la terre. C'est Votre Majesté qui a suscité dans toute l'Europe civilisée un mouvement providentiel, et y a allumé dans tous les coeurs généreux un feu sacré, capable de les faire concourir aux grandes entreprises non seulement scientifiques et civilisatrices, mais encore religieuses et catholiques, pour la rédemption de l'Afrique centrale.' See Storme, *Rapports*, pp. 157-64, here p. 157; see also Comboni to Leopold II, 5 July 1878, in Roeykens, *La Politique religieuse*, vol. 1, no. 126.

¹⁸ See also. Planque to Franchi (Cardinal prefect of the Propaganda Fide Congregation), 7 May 1877, in Storme, *Rapports*, pp. 12-15; id., 'Engagement de la Propagande', pp. 261-4.

¹⁹ Storme, *Rapports*, pp. 56-62, here p. 58.

²⁰ Roeykens, *La Politique religieuse*, vol. 1, nos. 6-19, 150; see also id., 'Le Baron Léon de Béthune et la

politique religieuse de Léopold II en Afrique', in *Zaire*, 10 (1956), pp. 3-68, 227-82; M. Storme, 'Léopold II, les Missions du Congo et la fondation du Séminaire africain de Louvain', in *Zaire*, 6 (1952), pp. 1-24; id., 'Engagement de la propagande', pp. 272 ff. On 24 Aug. 1886 Leopold II wrote to Baron Lambermont, who had been his right hand man from the moment his colonial ambitions in Africa had started: 'Je tiens à ce que notre Congo soit évangélisé par des Belges' (cit. in F. Bontinck, 'Le Conditionnement historique de l'implantation de l'Église Catholique au Congo', in *Revue du clergé africain*, 24 (1969), pp. 132-45, here p. 139).

²¹ In 1891 there were 79 Protestant Missionaries in the Belgian Congo working at 19 posts, in contrast to 11 Catholic Missionaries working at 5 missionary posts. By 1908 at the end of the Leopoldian regime there were 200 Protestant missionaries working at 43 posts as against 403 Catholic Missionaries working at 58 posts. F. Bontinck, 'Le Conditionnement historique', p. 141.

the Belgian parliament and of the mistrust which was felt not only by Belgian liberals but also by Catholics towards their king's high-handed African schemes. In addition, Leopold suspected that—despite increased co-operation—Lavigerie's broadly based projects would ultimately serve the interests of France and give it a political advantage. The rivalry between the European powers made it inevitable that Leopold would attempt to internationalize or—as was closer to his real ideas—to neutralize the Congo Basin.

The English Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) became Leopold's major political partner in this scheme and provided support that proved to be important for the success of his plans.²² That it was an English mission was almost certainly of secondary importance to Leopold. For one thing English missionaries and English influence were predominant in both East and West Africa, while the British Government had already rejected Cameron's proposal to annex the Congo Basin (1875) and even after Stanley's journey had shown no particular interest in the region. In addition—in contrast to the territorially defined claims of France and, especially, Portugal—the British missionaries stood for both 'free trade' and 'free missionary activity'. A few years after settling in Fernando Po in 1841 the Baptists, together with former slaves from Jamaica, had already experienced the intolerance of the Spanish, who in 1858 elevated the Catholic faith to the only religion in the colony. As a result the Baptists had shifted their work to the Cameroon coastal area.

In 1877 Robert Arthington, a rich industrialist and philanthropist from Leeds whose evangelical enthusiasm for the Christianizing of Central Africa was in some ways comparable to the much more worldly ambitions of Leopold, offered the Baptist Missionary Society £1,000 to take up missionary work in the Congo. This could be most conveniently reached from Cameroon. After a further offer of £50 for a preparatory expedition, the committee took up Arthington's offer. In the same month in which the *Daily Telegraph* announced Stanley's arrival at the mouth of the Congo (17 September 1877), the missionary society's paper, the *Missionary Herald*, reported the new Congo plan.

As early as January 1878 two BMS missionaries, George Grenfell and Thomas Comber, received instructions from the Cameroon mission to investigate the Lower Congo. They travelled 140 kilometres up the Congo as far as Musuko and wrote a letter to the 'King of the Congo' announcing their visit. In July the same missionaries made two new forays. Their party reinforced in the second one by John Hartland, Henry Crudginton, and Holman Bentley, they tried to reach the Congo above the rapids of the Stanley Pool by travelling across country from San Salvador. They were forced back by the hostility of suspicious Africans in this area, who feared that the Europeans would interrupt their lucrative ivory trade between the Pool and San Salvador. In 1879 they set up a temporary base in San Salvador (Mbanza Congo), the headquarters of the former Christian kingdom of Mani Kongo. Not until February 1881 did Bentley and Crudginton succeed in reaching the Stanley Pool by following Stanley's route, travelling from Vivi and avoiding the Falls as far as Isangila.²³ In the

²² On this and the following discussion see: R. M. Slade, 'L'Attitude des missions protestantes vis-à-vis les puissances européennes au Congo avant 1885', in *Bulletin des séances de l'Institut Royal Coloniale Belge*, Brussels 1954, pp. 684-721; id., *English-speaking Missions in the Congo*

Independent State, 1878-1908, Brussels 1959; see also Lagergren, *Mission and State*, pp. 33 ff.

²³ See also W. H. Bentley, *Pioneering in the Congo*, 2 vols., New York, London 1900, here vol. 1, pp. 299 ff.

meantime, Stanley had entered Leopold's service and founded a trading station in Vivi, before making for the Pool once more.²⁴

Meanwhile the Baptist Missionary Society had been joined by another English missionary group with an interest in the Congo. In 1877 Henry Grattan Guinness, a non-denominational Evangelist, and his wife Fanny had founded the Livingstone Inland Mission (LIM) with the support of religiously motivated industrialists in Cardiff and Liverpool.²⁵ The LIM, too, intended to push through the Congo into the African interior. The first BMS expedition had just ended in February 1878 when two LIM missionaries, Ström and Craven, arrived in Boma. In a matter of months they received reinforcements. At the same time the LIM attempted to make itself more independent of its commercial backers. It also sought a route into the interior different from Stanley's, whose personality and activities they regarded with suspicion. Although it rejected Stanley's use of force, the LIM, too, pressed for white rule in Africa. Its missionaries set up stations in Palabala, Banza Manteke, Matadi, and Bemba on the northern coast of the Congo, and in Mikumbungu and Lukunga in 1882. By February 1883 LIM missionaries had reached Leopoldville.

The Catholic missionaries in Landana, on the other hand, were deeply interested in the Belgian scheme under Stanley's leadership and had made contact in Boma and Vivi with the members of the Belgian expedition. Father H. Carrie, the leader of the mission, wrote: 'Il faut pour l'honneur de la religion, que nous marchions dans le Congo, à la suite de la science et du Commerce; il faut que nous luttons contre les protestants.'²⁶ The fear of being overtaken in the race by missionaries of a rival denomination or even by their own confessional group, stimulated the 'scramble to the Stanley Pool' that now began among the missionaries. In fact rivalry between missionary groups was a substantial overall cause of missionary expansionism.

The news that the French explorer Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza (1852-1905) had reached the Stanley Pool by crossing the Ogowe plains intensified the missionary scramble for the Stanley Pool and Upper Congo. What had hitherto simply been denominational rivalry now entered the sphere of nationalism. Brazza had left his Senegalese sergeant Malamine on the north bank of the Pool in order to protect French interests there. On the way to the mouth of the Congo Brazza managed to convince the Spiritans that they had a 'political' task in the Congo. He suggested that they should assist Malamine to maintain the 'honour of the French flag' and support the French post at Mfa (later Brazzaville) until the French government had officially taken possession of the area.²⁷

Brazza's ideas fell on fertile ground. After all, French missionaries had always been France's best supporters in its overseas territories. They had also tried to spread French influence on the African coast, supported by financial subsidies—often considerable—from the French *Ministère de la Marine et des Colonies*.²⁸ Once established—with the tricolour waving above every missionary station—they became the most energetic advocates of French territorial claims. When, for example, France

²⁴ H. M. Stanley, *The Congo and the Founding of its Free State*, 2 vols., London 1885.

²⁵ The Congo (Zaire) was called 'Livingstone' by Stanley, but the name did not become accepted.

²⁶ Cited in M. Storme, *La Pénétration missionnaire en Afrique équatoriale*, p. 317 (n.d.); see also Roeykens, *La*

Politique religieuse, vol. 1, no. 172.

²⁷ See H. Carrie to I. Schwindenhammer, 30 Nov. 1880, in Roeykens, *La Politique religieuse*, vol. 1, no. 237; also no. 266.

²⁸ See for example, H. Brunschwig (ed.), *Brazza Explorateur: L'Ougoué, 1875-1879*, Paris 1966, p. 38.

tried to get rid of costly colonial possessions after its defeat by Prussia and negotiated with Britain to exchange Gabon for the English colony of Gambia (Bathurst), the missionaries refused to give up this centre of French Catholic missionary work in West Africa ('Libreville'). The evacuation of Gabon had to be abandoned, even though it had already begun.²⁹

Carrie, the Apostolic (Vice-) Prefect in Landana, did not therefore hesitate for an instant in implementing Brazza's scheme.³⁰ He entrusted Father Prosper-Philippe Augouard (1852-1921) a former Zouave in the Corps de Charette, with the task. The man who became, in the words of his biographer G. G. Beslier, the 'apostle of the Congo', possessed missionary enthusiasm and patriotic fervour in equal measure. He saw a fertile field lying ready and waiting for the spread of the Catholic faith in every area where France asserted its influence, and acted on the principle of 'la Croix et le nom de la France'. Augouard was positively obsessed with the idea that French missionaries, together with French influence and French culture, could build a bridge right across Africa to reach their compatriots in the East.³¹

A first expedition towards the Congo (5 April to 27 August 1881) following Brazza's route to the Stanley Pool ended disappointingly, largely because of lack of co-ordination with Brazza and hostility from the inhabitants of Mfa.³² However, after Brazza had visited Landana again and had initiated Augouard into his political plans, co-operation improved. Although he was continuously supported by Stanley, Augouard was completely on the side of the Frenchman. As he wrote:

Pour quelques certaines de francs Brazza acquit d'un seul coup d'immenses territoires à la France, tandis que, sur la rive opposée, Stanley dut traiter avec une multitude de roitelets auxquels il fut forcé de donner des certaines de mille francs. M. de Brazza avait donc largement roulé son terrible concurrent américain.³³

Initially, however, Brazza planned to secure the coastal area north of the mouth of the Congo for France in order to establish a more convenient rail and shipping link between the Atlantic and the north coast of the Stanley Pool. Since Landana had already been under the influence of French missionaries for some years, he assumed that by 'right' of the first claim the whole coast between the Estuary of Gabon and that of the Congo belonged to France. After Leopold's agents took over the valley of the Niari-Kwilu in the north of the Lower Congo, French ambitions centred on the

²⁹ J. de Witte, *Les Deux Congo: 35 ans d'Apostolat du Congo français—Monsieur Augouard. Les Origines du Congo Belge*, Paris 1913, pp. 3-6. Witte cites (p. 7) J. B. Piolet who in his voluminous history of the Catholic French mission writes: 'Sans nos missionnaires, nous ne posséderions peut-être pas le Congo.' See J. B. Piolet, *Les Missions Catholiques françaises au XIX^e siècle*, 6 vols., Paris 1902, vol. 5: *Missions d'Afrique*, p. 227, see also pp. 246, 268.

³⁰ See also Carrie to Foreign Minister Jules Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire, 18 Apr. 1881, Archives Générales des Pères du St. Esprit Paris (ACSSp): Box no. 470/II; Le Messager de Saint-Joseph, 1 Aug. 1882, p. 230.

³¹ G. Goyau, *Monseigneur Augouard*, Paris 1926, here pp. 36, 99; see also J. de Witte, *Monseigneur Augouard*:

Archevêque Titulaire de Cassiopée, Vicaire apostolique du Congo français. See notes de voyage et sa correspondance, Paris 1924, pp. 4 ff.; G. G. Beslier, *L'Apôtre du Congo: Mgr. Augouard*, Paris 1926.

³² Augouard to Hanet-Clery (commandant of Gabon), 3 Sept. 1881, in: H. Brunswig (ed.), *Brazza Explorateur: Les Traités Makoko 1880-1882*, Paris 1972, pp. 222-4; see also N. Ney (ed.), *Conférence et lettres de P. Savorgnan de Brazza sur ses trois explorations dans l'Ouest Africain de 1875 à 1886*, Paris 1887, pp. 417-21; *28 Années au Congo: Lettres de Mgr. Augouard*, 2 vols., Poitiers 1905, here: vol. 1, pp. 234 ff.; de Witte, *Monseigneur Augouard*, pp. 14-19, 108-65.

³³ Undated letter cited in Goyau, *Monseigneur Augouard*, p. 35.

annexation of Loango, Pointe-Noire, Malembe, and Cabinda on the coast. Once again Brazza counted on the missionaries of Landana (part of Portuguese Cabinda).³⁴

Fired with patriotic enthusiasm, Augouard became an assiduous supporter of Brazza. He knew chief André Loemba of Loango, who had provided him with carriers for his expedition to the Pool, but who was under Portuguese influence. In a long conversation, during which a French gunboat (the *Sagittaire*) patrolled the bay, Augouard managed to persuade the chief to sign a 'peace treaty' with the French. In the same way the Bay of Pointe-Noire fell officially under French rule. Augouard had also concluded treaties with the chiefs of Landana, Malembe, and Cabinda. In the meantime, however, Portugal had claimed its 'rights' to Malembe, Landana, and Cabinda, and Ferry had agreed to the Portuguese claim. But the French naval commander, Cordier, could not recognize Augouard's treaties with the regional chiefs because his instructions stipulated that he was not to take over any territory below 5° 12' southern latitude. Later Ferry was to tell Augouard that his agreement with the Portuguese had been a mistake.³⁵

As a next step Augouard gained financial support amounting to 10,000 francs from the French government and obtained bales of cloth and rifles from Brazza before setting off on a second journey to Stanley Pool. A French warship took him as far as Noki from where he proceeded to the Pool with Albert Dolisie, Brazza's colleague and delegate for the coastal region and later governor of Gabon. On 17 September 1883 he reached the border of the area which had been ceded to France by Makoko. On a twenty-hectare site conceded by three chiefs near Mfa (Brazzaville) in exchange for

³⁴ See also Brazza's report to the Under-Secretary at the Colonial Ministry on 28 Aug. 1883, printed in Brunschwig, *Brazza Explorateur*, pp. 267 ff., esp. p. 275, also pp. 209-12. The importance placed on the Catholic Mission in relation to the Congo question in Paris is evident from an analysis by the Colonial minister Maurice Rouvier, written on his instructions at the start of 1882 (on the basis of a report sent by the commander of the warship *La Bourdonnais*, A. Penfentenyo, on 30 Dec. 1881) for the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Léon Gambetta. It says also: 'Pour arriver à ce résultat, M. de Penfentenyo signale un auxiliaire de 1er ordre, le personnel de la mission religieuse française de Landane, dirigée par le R. P. Carrie, préfet apostolique du Congo. De l'aveu même de M. Quéréal, officier de la Marine portugaise, dont le nom a déjà été cité au cours de ce travail, cette mission a déjà obtenu et obtient chaque jour des résultats surprenants, et cela même sur les points où l'influence britannique est prédominante par suite du développement des maisons de commerce anglaises. Cette mission a déjà établi des succursales à Mboma, dans le haut Congo, et à San-Antonio, à l'embouchure du fleuve; elle est sur le point d'en établir une à Stanley-Pool même, et l'Abbé Augouard, chargé d'étudier le projet, reçut chez les Batéké, en août 1881, après un voyage de 27 jours un accueil moins hostile que Stanley, grâce au drapeau tricolore dont il avait pris soin de se munir. Il résulte des renseignements fournis par ce missionnaire que les chefs batéké l'engagèrent à revenir bientôt avec M. de Brazza et lui promirent même leur appui pour l'établissement d'une mission. Il ne semble donc pas

douteux que si nos nationaux reparaissaient ensemble dans ces régions, et surtout s'ils y apportaient quelques présents, l'on ne pût arriver facilement à faire reconnaître l'Abbé Augouard comme 'résident et représentant officiel de la France à Stanley-Pool'. (Ibid., p. 230).

³⁵ P. Augouard to P. Gaetan, A bord du *Sagittaire*, ACSSp Box 471 B/VI; see also Augouard to P. Gaetan, 24 Apr. 1883, *ibid.*; Augouard to P. Duparquet, 19 May 1883, *ibid.*; Augouard to H. Carrie, 30 Mar. 1883, in: Roeykens, *La Politique religieuse*, vol. 1, no. 359; Augouard to H. Carrie, 6 Apr. 1884, *ibid.*, no. 360; Le Berre (vicar apostolic of the 'two Guineas') to Cardinal prefect Simeoni, 6 July 1883, *ibid.*, no. 377; see also Augouard to D. Nisard (deputy director of the political department of the Foreign Ministry), 9 May 1884, *ibid.*, no. 391. Augouard to his parents, 6 Apr. 1883, in *28 Années au Congo*, pp. 301-3; N. Cordier to C. Brun (Minister for Colonial and Navy Affairs), 7 May 1883, Archives centrales de la Marine, Vincennes: B B⁴ 1942; on these events see also de Witte, *Monseigneur Augouard*, pp. 20-4; Beslier, *Apôtre du Congo*, pp. 97-101; Goyau, *Monseigneur Augouard*, pp. 51-7. On the Portuguese claim to protectorates see Ministère de la Marine et des Colonies, Droits de Patronage du Portugal en Afrique. Memoranda (of 11 Apr. 1881 and 1 Mar. 1883), Lisbon 1883 (in: ACSSp Box no. 468/I); for the events on the spot (Mar., May 1883) see L. Jadin, 'Informations du lieutenant N. Cordier sur l'Association Internationale Africaine, tirées des Archives du Ministère de la Marine, 1883', in *Académie Royale des Sciences Coloniales (Brussels) bulletin des séances*, 5 (1959), pp. 288-316.

some clothes, hats, chains, blankets, pearls, and so on, he founded a mission station, named St Joseph de Linzolo, before returning to the coast.³⁶ Augouard then travelled to Lisbon where he met the French ambassador Laboulaye, and to Paris, where he spoke to the Foreign Minister, Ferry, as well as to officials of the *Ministère de la Marine et des Colonies* and the Ministry of Culture. In the French capital he forcefully lobbied for territorial acquisitions, supporting Brazza's goals and continuing to push France's claims to Landana. At the same time he demanded that the French government should act immediately, and make more substantial resources available.³⁷ He visited Leopold and went on to Rome before returning to the Congo, carrying 10,000 francs from special ministry funds and secret instructions for Brazza. Early in 1885 he met Brazza again. This time Augouard's fame ensured him a reception with full official pomp and he was greeted by Makoko as 'gardien du pavillon français'.³⁸

Meanwhile Brazza had been officially appointed 'General Commissioner' for the 'mission de l'Ouest Africain' on 15 February 1883. While the Spiritans developed close co-operation with him and the French government,³⁹ the Baptists also started co-ordinating their activities with Leopold's Congo schemes and with his European political goals. In the Congo, relations between Leopold's representatives and the missionaries, who were following in Stanley's exact footsteps, were excellent. Leopold's plenipotentiary was the first to be told by the BMS about the raising of the French flag at the Pool. He offered the BMS a large area at the Pool, guaranteed to protect them from the indigenous population and gave the missionaries a protective escort for the establishment of their stations.⁴⁰ Comber wrote to the Mission Secretary, Baynes, on 4 June 1882: 'Are we to be protected by the "fort" and perhaps partly identified with the AIA? Or are we to run the risk of settling among the people who, for some long time will not understand us or our mission?' Three days later he had decided: 'Bentley and I go up to-morrow to Stanley-Pool to secure our ground.'⁴¹ This was land which the BMS had directly bought from Stanley, whereas previously land had only been acquired from native owners. At the same time the mission agreed to a

³⁶ P. Augouard to P. Gaetan, 24 Apr. 1883, ACSSp: Box 471 B/VI; see also the report written by the General Superior Emonet to Prime Minister Jules Ferry, 14 Jan. 1884, Ministère des Relations Extérieures Paris—Archives (MREA): Afrique 89 (Congo and Gabon 5); *Bulletin de la Congrégation*, vol. 13, 1883–6, p. 924; also *28 Années au Congo*, pp. 308–38; de Witte, *Monseigneur Augouard*, pp. 25–30, 166–93.

³⁷ P. Augouard to H. Carrie, 28 Apr. 1884, ACSSp: Box 471 B/VI (on his visit to Lisbon); P. Augouard to H. Carrie, 25 May 1884, *ibid.* (on his conversations in the Foreign Ministry); P. Augouard to H. Carrie, 22 June 1884, *ibid.* (on his audience with Ferry); see also P. Augouard to A. Emonet, 17/18 Apr. 1884, in Roeykens, *La Politique religieuse*, vol. 1, no. 390; Augouard to D. Nisard, 9 May 1884, *ibid.*, no. 391, see also de Witte, *Les Deux Congo*, pp. 39–41; *id.*, *Monseigneur Augouard*, pp. 30–1; Beslier, *L'Apôtre du Congo*, pp. 166 ff.; Goyau, *Monseigneur Augouard*, pp. 66–71.

³⁸ J. Ferry to P. Augouard, 27 Aug. 1884, ACSSp: Box no. 181 A/V ('Je me félicite de pouvoir vous marquer ainsi—par une allocation extraordinaire de 10,000 francs, [H. G.]—le constant intérêt que porte le

Gouvernement de la République à une œuvre qu'est destinée à accroître l'influence française au centre de l'Afrique . . .'); P. Augouard to J. Ferry, 25 May 1885, ACSSp: Box no. 181 A/VI. On P. Augouard's visit to Leopold II, see his report to A. Emonet, 16 May 1884, in Roeykens, *La Politique religieuse*, vol. 1, no. 393.

³⁹ See also Emonet to J. Ferry, 15 Jan. 1884, MREA: Afrique 89 (Congo and Gabon 5) (on French missionaries accompanying Brazza's expedition from Gabon to the Congo and Chavannes to Alima); Brazza to J. Ferry, 4 May 1884, *ibid.* (suggestions to set up a missionary station between Manyanga and Isangila in order to secure French interests in the area); see also D. Barillec's note (General Secretary of the Spiritans) 15 Sept. 1882 on conversations between the missionary leadership and Brazza and conversation in the Foreign Ministry prior to ratification of the Brazza-Makoko Treaty by the French chambers, in: Roeykens, *La Politique religieuse*, vol. 1, no. 338.

⁴⁰ See also Stanley, *The Congo*, vol. 1, pp. 20 ff, 187, 357.

⁴¹ Cited in Slade, 'L'Attitude des missions protestantes', p. 702 n. 3; see also Stanley, *The Congo*, vol. i, p. 445.

preliminary treaty which (after slight modification) was signed in London on 24 November 1882 by Leopold's right-hand man, Strauch. Under its terms the Society pledged itself to recognize the exclusive trading rights of the 'Association' (after 1882 the *Association Internationale du Congo* (AIC)). The missionaries had no objections to Stanley's use of force: 'Yet . . . we thought the action of the A.I.A. quite right, and agreed with them that a severe lesson was necessary on this third effort of the people to drive away the expedition.'⁴²

Good co-operation with Belgian agents in the Congo, generous grants of land, and Leopold's assurances of aid to all missionaries—Leopold did indeed supply Catholic and Protestant missions equally with equipment and considerable sums of money—all helped to promote increasingly close links between the king and the BMS. But the overriding impetus came from the mission's fear of Portuguese claims to patronage. The Portuguese had provided every justification for such fears by establishing a fort near San Salvador (1865) and intensifying their missionary activity in the Congo area (1881). The anticlerical, laicized Portuguese government had acted according to Gambetta's well-known dictum: 'L'anticléricalisme n'est pas un article d'exportation.'⁴³ The Portuguese claim, prompted by vast political ambitions, was to ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the whole of South Equatorial Africa, including the Stanley Pool and the Kingdom of Makoko. Although the Portuguese *padroado* claim was in fact directed in equal measure against the Spiritans and Lavigerie's planned missions, to the Baptists it was synonymous with Catholicism pure and simple. To the English missions Portuguese influence, no less than French, was identical with the 'Catholic question' and hence with exclusive territorial and missionary rights.

The close co-operation of the 'men on the spot' with the missionaries inevitably strengthened Leopold's direct, political contacts with the British Missionary Society. He had early learnt about the BMS's activities in the Congo, when Henry Baynes, Secretary of the BMS, had contacted the Belgian envoy in London, Baron Solvyns. Leopold had at once shown interest by subscribing to the *Missionary Herald*. Although he considered the French Catholic missionaries necessary for spreading European influence among the indigenous population, he saw them as more or less the political vanguard of France. The Protestant British missionaries, by contrast, did not seem to be working directly in Britain's national interests. Indeed, their programmatic linking of 'evangelism' with 'free trade' seemed to make them more useful than the Catholics for Leopold's directly political plans and, as a result, they appeared to be his allies. Leopold therefore found the most effective allies in his scheme for a commercial internationalization of the Congo Basin, intended to mask his territorial ambitions, among the British chambers of commerce, the anti-slavery societies, and other nonconformist philanthropic societies, with the BMS at their head.⁴⁴

This became clear when the plan to ratify an Anglo-Portuguese Treaty (26 February 1884) became known to the British public. The Treaty would have secured Portugal's territorial claims on the coast between 8° and 5° 12' southern latitude, together with the 'Portuguese' hinterland belonging to it, and along the Congo as far as Noki.

⁴² Slade, 'L'Attitude des missions protestantes', p. 707 n. 1.

⁴³ See E. Axelsson, *Portugal and the Scramble for Africa, 1875-1891*, Johannesburg 1967, and W. G. Clarence-Smith's contribution to this volume.

⁴⁴ As well as the works of R. M. Slade (1954, 1959) already mentioned in n. 22 see above all R. T. Anstey, *Britain and the Congo in the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford 1962, pp. 121-3.

Commercial and religious interests ('free trade' and 'free exercise of religion'), already closely intertwined at the level of individuals and ideas, now worked hand-in-hand in Britain in the agitation for Leopold's goals. While the Foreign Minister, Granville, remained sceptical about Leopold's intentions, almost the whole of England's commercial, philanthropic, and religious public were on his side. By virtue of its parliamentary, press, and Church connections the BMS took on the role of opinion leader.⁴⁵

From 1881 on, the BMS had already informed the British government about the French action in the Congo, pointing out the danger of French attempts to monopolize trade in the area. In March 1882 the BMS once again took the initiative by sending Granville a copy of the Brazza-Makoko Treaty. The government itself had been unconcerned about the treaty. After this the Mission supported influential parliamentarians—Quaker Jacob Bright, for example, the brother of John Bright, founder of the free trade Anti-Corn Law League—in their advocacy of Britain's free trade and commercial goals. Petitions to Parliament against the planned ratification of the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty followed. In April 1884 Joseph Tritton, a businessman, Treasurer of the BMS and member of the London Chamber of Commerce, led a delegation to the Foreign Office to protest against the treaty on the grounds of Portugal's protectionist policies. The BMS missionary Holman Bentley in particular proved to be a committed and tireless supporter of Leopold. Not only did he win the influential liberal parliamentarian, W. E. Forster, for Leopold's cause, but he also provided articles for the English press. The widely distributed and influential BMS journals were, in any case, completely on Leopold's side. From June 1884 they advocated the creation of an independent state in the Congo under Leopold's leadership, and in October the *Freeman* quite openly urged British recognition for the flag of the AIC (in April 1884 it had been recognized by the USA).

During the Berlin West Africa Conference the BMS missionaries—the Secretary of the BMS, Baynes, as well as Bentley, urgently summoned by telegram—provided direct support for Leopold's ambitions. When, for example, France invoked the Makoko Treaty in order to claim a more substantial area on the southern coast of the Stanley Pool than Leopold's agents were willing to concede, Bentley was successfully able to use his local knowledge to secure the rival territorial claims of the AIC.⁴⁶

Above all, the BMS could consider the famous Article 6 of the Berlin Act as a belated success in its struggle against the Portuguese Treaty. Paragraph 3 of the article laid down the following guarantee: 'The free and public exercise of all forms of Divine worship and the right to build edifices for religious purposes, and to organize religious Missions belonging to all creeds, shall not be limited or fettered in any way whatsoever.'⁴⁷ This formulation was largely based on the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty (Article 7), in which Granville, under pressure from the English missions led by the BMS, had succeeded in gaining the concession of free religious activity for all Christian denominations ('of whatever nation or country') in the Portuguese area covered by the

⁴⁵ Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, esp. pp. 64, 68–71, 113, 120–5, 154, 241–3. (Text of the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty) see Lagergren, *Mission and State*, pp. 66 ff.

⁴⁶ Slade, 'L'Attitude des missions protestantes', pp. 718–20; id., *English-Speaking Missions*, pp. 73–4;

Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, pp. 178 f., 184 f.

⁴⁷ R. J. Gavin and J. A. Betley (eds.), *The Scramble for Africa: Documents on the Berlin West African Conference and Related Subjects, 1884/85*, Ibadan 1973, p. 291.

treaty. This concession had only been gained in the teeth of strong resistance from the Portuguese, who did not want to concede the British rights that they had previously refused both them and the French Catholics.

By the time of the Berlin West Africa Conference, the question of 'religious freedom' was no longer a real issue. There was unanimous agreement about the pioneering work of the missionaries and their civilizing achievements, and delegates confidently expressed their expectations for the future. The Italian representative, Count de Launay, surprised the Conference with a list of twenty-one 'famous' Italian missionaries while the French delegate, Baron de Courcel, gave a talk in which he recalled, 'with deep satisfaction', Stanley's remarks about the achievements of French missionaries under Lavigerie and Augouard. After this the Conference quickly reached agreement on a formula protecting 'with distinction of creed or nation . . . all religions, scientific or charitable institutions'. Earlier the British delegate, Sir Edward Malet, with some support from Said Pasha, had gained the Conference's acceptance of the principle of freedom and equality of all confessions and denominations, in what was probably also an echo of the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty. Finally, raising the possibility of later Muslim missionary activity, the Turkish representative managed to replace the specification of protection for all 'Churches, Temples, and Chapels' with the wider term 'religious edifices' in the final text.⁴⁸ The net result was that the Conference recognized 'religious freedom' for all Christian Churches and missionary societies and, after some hesitation among the Catholic delegates, for Islam as well.

Finally, 'religious toleration' and 'freedom of conscience' were 'expressly guaranteed' to the 'natives' in the last paragraph of Article 6. This concession, however, was diametrically opposed to the idea of the superiority of Western Christian civilization that dominated the Conference, which the Africans themselves did not, of course, attend. (The British representative did at least refer to this fact and the resulting moral obligation incurred by Western states.) The Conference delegates can thus hardly have had the traditional religious values and norms of the Africans in mind. After all, the intention was to bestow upon them the 'advantages' and 'blessings' of European civilization. In practice, therefore, very little of this formally conceded religious freedom remained, especially when African religious and cultural concepts were incompatible with the civilizing ideas of the Europeans, and in particular, the missionaries.⁴⁹

For the missionaries of the era of high imperialism, firmly convinced of the close connection between Western culture and Christianity, the absolute cultural superiority of the Christian West was not a matter of debate. The same conviction was reflected in the overwhelming Western optimism expressed at the Berlin Congo Conference. The missionaries' unilinear, biblical, and teleological model of cultural development necessarily culminated in 'Christian culture', and Christianity's first task was seen as bringing 'culture' to 'uncivilized' peoples.

⁴⁸ Ibid.; see also E. Banning, *Mémoires politiques et diplomatiques: comment fut fondé le Congo Belge*, Paris-Brussels 1927, pp. 23 f.

⁴⁹ See also Axelson, *Culture Confrontation in the Lower Congo*, pp. 207 ff., 274-89, especially pp. 285 and 288; more generally H. A. C. Cairns *Prelude to Imperialism*,

pp. 45-6, 154-7, 174-7, 199-207, 218-22, 233-45; H. Gründer, *Christliche Mission und deutscher Imperialismus: Eine politische Geschichte ihrer Beziehungen während der deutschen Kolonialzeit (1884-1914) unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Afrikas und Chinas*, Paderborn 1982, pp. 335 ff.

This sense of cultural superiority was paralleled by a conviction, strengthened since the middle of the nineteenth century by a pseudo-scientific racism, that undeveloped peoples were morally depraved. In addition, the blacks had inherited Noah's curse (Genesis 9: 25) from their alleged ancestor, Ham. Even though this 'Ham theory' which had been taken up by Christians of both confessions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and had survived into the nineteenth century, was a pseudo-theological interpretation of the Bible, the divine 'chastisement' of Africa had become a missionary dogma, allegedly verified by the black skin colour of the Negro and the historical fact of slavery.⁵⁰ By projecting Luke's admonition 'to light those living in darkness' (Luke 1: 79) onto the whole phenomenon of extra-European culture, missionaries came to see all alien cultures as a swamp of ignorance, superstition, and immorality. The missionary saw himself as acting in partnership with the colonial state in shouldering the 'White Man's burden'. Since God, in his 'divine purpose', had evidently chosen to make use of both missionary work and colonization, this partnership rested on a fundamental inner necessity. The internal link perceived by Christian missionaries between the spread of Western power and the divine expectation that the world would be evangelized meant that a *fundamental* critique of Western colonialism was not possible. On the contrary, co-operation with responsibly minded, 'forward' colonial circles seemed positively advisable.

Thus the Christian interpretation bestowed an aura of 'divine historical' purpose—even a 'revelatory' quality—on great geographical discoveries, increased worldwide communication, and constantly increasing territorial conquests. The missionaries saw the fresh expansion of Europe as a stupendous 'sacred enterprise', which simultaneously served to spread the Christian faith. This teleological-eschatological interpretation of secular imperialism thus provided a central impetus towards reviving missionary expansion in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The interest created by the Berlin West Africa Conference therefore extended beyond the European centres of power and trade into missionary and religious circles. Political, economic, and religious motives formed a unity in the 'scramble for Africa'. Even though the Berlin Conference did not bring the 'partition of Africa' in the true sense of the word, European rivalry and different reactions at the periphery did mean a considerable increase in the West's expansionist tendencies and urges to acquire power. Within two decades the continent was as good as partitioned. Missionaries followed, or preceded the colonial conquerors. The need for protection and the interest in expansion determined their close co-operation at the stage of conquest and acquisition. State and Church penetrated into the newly discovered and pacified areas side by side.

This joint penetration not only involved missionaries in the process of imperialist expansion, it also integrated them in the structure of colonial rule.⁵¹ It is true that the missionaries, as 'protectors of the natives', tried to limit the damage done by colonial rule. The effect of their protests in individual cases is well documented—for example,

⁵⁰ See e.g. P. Augouard: 'La race noire est bien la race de Cham, la race maudite de Dieux . . . Ces malheureux enfants de Cham semblent porter sur leur front le sceau de la réprobation prononcée contre leur père', see *28 Années au Congo*, pp. 77, 193, also 229; see also the

quotation from the 'Mémoire secret' of Lavigerie above p. 89. On the 'Ham Theory' also Gründer, *Christliche Mission*, pp. 337-8.

⁵¹ Gründer, *Christliche Mission*, pp. 321 ff., and 329 ff.

the revelations by Protestant missionaries (after some initial tactical restraint) of Leopold's brutal and exploitative methods. On the whole, however, both at home and on the 'front-line', the missionaries were in alliance with the colonial movement, encouraging and supporting it, both ideologically and propagandistically. In the colonies they readily took up the task of educating 'the natives' in the 'duties of obedience'—a task highly valued by the colonial rulers. By 'training them for work' they also created commercially marketable needs among the colonized peoples and accustomed them both to production for the market and wage earning.

As a rule, therefore, colonial officials and officers considered the missionaries useful (and economical) allies in their political and economic aims. The agents of the Congo State also acted in this belief. For example an (undated) report from the end of 1888 (with corrections by Van Eetvelde and de Cuvelier) comes to the following conclusion:

Chaque mission fondée est un foyer nouveau d'où rayonne l'influence du blanc, c'est une étape de plus vers la conquête pacifique des populations indigènes. Les missions, comme les stations de l'État, comme les établissements de commerce, augmentent les points de contact entre les indigènes et les européens, elles créent entre eux des relations continues de plus en plus fréquentes.

Even the Protestant missionaries, who were more critical and therefore increasingly unpopular, were referred to in the following terms in a letter by C. Janssen, Governor General of the Congo State, to Van Eetvelde on 24 September 1891:

Les missionnaires protestants n'ont sur les indigènes aucune influence religieuse: ils ne font du reste guère de propagande. Ces missions sont néanmoins d'une grande utilité, car ce sont autant de centres européens qui viennent en aide à l'État et étendent son autorité morale.⁵²

After it took over the Congo in 1908, the Belgian colonial state also clearly supported Catholicism. All missions were provided with extensive estates and given generous financial support.⁵³ This ownership had been sealed by an agreement between the Holy See and the Congo (26 May 1906). The last article of this convention (paragraph 9) stated: 'Il est convenu que les deux parties contractantes recommanderont toujours à leurs subordonnés la nécessité de conserver la plus parfaite harmonie entre les missionnaires et les agents de l'État.'⁵⁴ With this agreement the co-operation between (Catholic) Church and the Belgian Congo—despite some internal conflicts—was firmly established. Catholic missions not only maintained their monopoly on education until 1948 but henceforth substantially determined Belgium's native policy.⁵⁵ Although they supported secondary and university education for the Congolese after 1945, the missionaries' relations with the colonial state remained free of major friction.

⁵² Cited by L. Cuypers, 'La Politique foncière de l'état indépendant du Congo à l'égard des missions catholiques', in *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*, 57 (1962), pp. 45-65 and 446-69, here: 463 f.; see also Gründer, *Christliche Mission*, p. 328.

⁵³ See Cuypers, 'La Politique foncière'; id., 'La Coopération de l'État indépendant du Congo avec les missions catholiques', in *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*, 65 (1970), pp. 30-55; Bontinck, 'Le Conditionnement historique', pp. 140-3. On the spread and development of the missions in the Belgian Congo see also E. M.

Brackman, *Histoire du protestantisme au Congo*, Brussels 1961 and F. de Meeus and D. R. Steenberghen, *Les Missions religieuses au Congo Belge*, Antwerpen 1947, especially pp. 56 ff.

⁵⁴ Bontinck, 'Le Conditionnement historique', p. 143.

⁵⁵ This and the subsequent account is based on M. D. Markowitz, 'The Missions and Political Development in the Congo', in *Africa*, 40 (1970), pp. 234-47; id., *Cross and Sword: The Political Role of Christian Missions in the Belgian Congo, 1908-1960*, Stanford, Cal. 1973.

Tensions only developed when Buisseret, an anticlerical liberal, became Colonial Minister in 1954. In this dispute the missions began to move closer to the Congolese, who sought the missions' support in their quest for national liberation. By spreading the Christian message the missionaries had—more unconsciously than deliberately—unleashed a religiously based desire for human rights and liberty, especially among the educated groups (*évolués*), which led to the development of proto-nationalist movements. In June 1956 the Catholic bishops for the first time publicly spoken out for a gradual emancipation of the Congolese, thus legitimizing Congolese opposition to colonial rule. However, their support for black independence was less an endorsement of a unitary Congolese nationalism than of a 'parochial', regional, and tribally based nationalism. It was here that the missionaries evidently saw the best chance of preserving their position.

Consequences of the Foundation of the German Empire: Colonial Expansion and the Process of Political-Economic Rationalization

HARMUT POGGE VON STRANDMANN

Historians who deal with the British and French colonial empires in the second half of the nineteenth century are faced with the task of explaining changes in colonial policy in Europe as well as in the colonial territories. Consequently the Berlin Conference of 1884–5 has to be fitted into the framework of an ongoing concern for overseas possessions. For historians who concentrate on Germany's colonial ventures the problem of continuity does not exist. On the contrary they are faced with the problem of Germany's sudden entry into the colonial field. The difference between the old colonial powers and the new ones has also influenced the historiography of imperialism. So in the case of Germany the metropolitan causes for the new departure have been emphasized, whereas in the cases of Britain and France it has been possible to locate causes for further expansion into the overseas territories and in those countries or areas where British or French influence was paramount.¹

But whatever the so-called 'pull-factors' were in West Africa which contributed to Germany's intervention there, the crucial decision to proceed with colonial policy was prepared in Germany and taken in Berlin. Nothing has made this situation more clear than the convening of an international conference in Berlin to settle some West and Central African problems shortly after the German flag had been hoisted over three coastal stretches in Togoland, the Cameroons, and South West Africa. On the German side the Conference was designed to improve Germany's standing in overseas affairs. But it also attracted inevitably greater international attention to Germany's first steps as a colonial power than the acquisitions of 1884–5 actually justified. In Germany the reaction seems to have been the other way round. The colonial acquisitions were

¹ See for recent bibliographical essays and lists, H. Pogge von Strandmann and A. Smith, 'The German Empire in Africa and British Perspectives', in P. Gifford and R. Louis (eds.), *Britain and Germany in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule*, New Haven 1967, pp. 709–65. H. U. Wehler, *Bismarck und der Imperialismus*, 4th edn., Munich 1976, pp. 507–16. H. Pogge von Strandmann, 'The German Role in Africa and German Imperialism', in *African Affairs*, 69 (1970), pp. 381–9. H. Stoecker, 'Bürgerliche Literatur seit 1945 zur Geschichte der deutschen Kolonialherrschaft in Afrika', in H. Stoecker (ed.), *Drang nach Afrika: Die koloniale Expansionspolitik und Herrschaft des deutschen Imperialismus in Afrika von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des zweiten Weltkrieges*, Berlin 1977,

pp. 353–8. H. Gründer, *Geschichte der deutschen Kolonien*, Paderborn 1985, pp. 257–93. All the recent works on the initial phase of German colonialism have emphasized the metropolitan 'push' factors. This includes the works listed above as well as W. Smith, *The German Colonial Empire*, Chapel Hill 1978. However a different approach has been used in the studies of German rule in the colonies. See the bibliographical essay by J. Dülffer, 'Deutsche Kolonialherrschaft in Afrika', in *Neue politische Literatur*, 26 (1981), pp. 458–73. In the case of Britain a reference to D. K. Fieldhouse, *Economics and Empire 1830–1914*, London 1973, pp. 8–87, 459–77, has to suffice. See also W. J. Mommsen and J. Osterhammel (eds.), *Imperialism and After: Continuities and Discontinuities*, London 1986.

regarded as more important than the Conference itself.² Yet few events could have more firmly emphasized that the newly created German Empire had joined the ranks of the colonial powers than the Berlin Conference.

On the other hand historians used to regard the diplomacy leading up to the Conference and the Anglo-German clash over Angra Pequena as an element in Bismarck's foreign policy which was governed by European considerations.³ Recently the explanation for Bismarck's decision has been found in domestic politics.⁴ The focal point of this explanation has been, as in the previous case, the decision-making process of 1884-5. However, long-term economic causes have been used to explain the decisions to acquire colonies.⁵ In particular the economic crisis after 1873 and the subsequent uneven economic growth is supposed to have led to a drive for economic expansion and as a consequence to colonial acquisitions. The dynamism of this state-directed economic policy was regarded as part of a social defence strategy aimed at preserving the social and thus the political status quo in Imperial Germany.

Whereas in the older purely foreign political explanations cause and effect were confused, the second complex of explanations ran into problems because it was based on assumptions for which there is far too little evidence. It was postulated that the decision for acquiring colonies was based on an overall economic strategy, the main purpose of which was to stimulate economic growth. However, economic growth in turn would mean further industrialization, more industrial workers, and faster urbanization. All this would stimulate the cause of socialism and lead to a weakening of the agrarian dominated Germany. But an increase in the potential for Social Democratic recruitment was undesirable to most conservative-minded people. If the controversy of *Industriestaat versus Agrarstaat* at the end of the century is anything to go by, then it becomes clear that the promotion of industrial growth was politically not feasible during the 1880s. However there is some evidence of an understanding of the need to export. Yet the instrumentarium for such action to be effective was not sufficiently developed and did not really reach beyond appeals to seize opportunities and provide some information.⁶

As none of the potential colonial areas left unclaimed was economically sufficiently developed to boost demand for German industrial products it is difficult to see how colonial acquisitions in Africa could contribute to the success of a counter-cyclical

² *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung*, NS 1 (1888), p. 57. Of course, the Conference was discussed in the press, but it was felt that there was not much of a popular reaction. In his article on colonial policy Treitschke also commented on the Berlin Conference. For him Germany represented 'the human international law' at the Conference because Germany was a 'second-rank' sea power. 'If the Congo Conference succeeds in forbidding British arbitrary action in Central Africa, then the first common defence against British encroachments will not be the last'. K. A. Schiller (ed.), *H. v. Treitschke: Aufsätze, Reden und Briefe*, 5 vols., Meersburg 1929, vol. 4, pp. 665-75.

³ Typical examples are W. L. Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments, 1871-1890*, New York 1954, p. 318. A. J. P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe 1848-1918*, Oxford 1954, p. 294. H. Herzfeld, *Die Moderne Welt 1789-1945*, 2 vols., Braunschweig 1966, 5th edn., vol. 1, pp. 226 ff. See for a new overemphasis of

foreign policy, L. Gall, *Bismarck: Der weiße Revolutionär*, Frankfurt 1980, pp. 614-24. Moreover Gall is wrong if he believes that the contemporaries were not taken with Bismarck's colonial venture. For a more cautious approach see Gründer, *Geschichte*, pp. 55 ff.

⁴ H. Pogge von Strandmann, 'Domestic Origins of Germany's Colonial Expansion under Bismarck', in *Past and Present*, 42 (1969), pp. 140-59. Wehler, *Bismarck*, pp. 486-502. See also K. Bade, *Friedrich Fabri und der Imperialismus in der Bismarckzeit: Revolution—Depression—Expansion*, Freiburg 1975. In his model study the author underlines the importance of domestic politics implicitly rather than explicitly.

⁵ Wehler, *Bismarck*, pp. 61-111, 142-55, 215-25, 423-53.

⁶ See also H. Henning, 'Bismarcks Kolonialpolitik—Export eine Krise?', in K. E. Born (ed.), *Gegenwartsprobleme der Wirtschaft und der Wirtschaftswissenschaft*, Tübingen 1978, pp. 53-85.

economic strategy, over the next few years, even if it existed. As far as the extraction of raw materials was concerned pioneer investments had to be made first for which the returns would be uncertain. Indeed, the capital resources, if they were available, necessary for a build-up of infrastructure to put trade and investments on a sound footing would be difficult to find and could not match the expectations linked to trading in Europe, America, and the Far East. Thus colonial acquisitions in Africa in the 1880s could not be used to offset the effects of the economic crisis of the 1870s. Nor were they intended to do so. The Russian Foreign Minister Giers realized that a diversion for the economic and social problems in Germany might lie in any new economic venture rather than in colonial areas.⁷ This is not to say that there were no economic considerations when colonies were established. But the benefits could only be realized in the distant future.

To judge the economic potential of the colonies was difficult and as there were no immediate profits to be gained the capital remained invested elsewhere until such time as the prospects might improve. The counter-cyclical argument was not used at the time and would not have made sense in this context anyhow. It would have presupposed an understanding of economic cycles and of the possibilities of economic policy which the politicians and businessmen simply did not possess.

Colonial territories, such as they were available in Africa, were not regarded as the means by which short-term economic policies could be made. Businessmen were by and large not lured into believing that instant trade could be developed in Africa just because of over-optimistic reports by men like Stanley.⁸ The impact of positive reports is difficult to assess as there were at the time many reports in circulation which did not describe the economic possibilities in Africa in rosy terms.⁹

Thus businessmen were not inclined to have illusions about fast returns. The lack of private investment and very slow growth of trade after Germany acquired her colonies in Africa bear out the scepticism with which the business community regarded the economic prospects of trade and development in the areas staked out by Germany. Already in 1883 it was noted that the Berlin stock exchange looked at colonial enterprises with great distrust.¹⁰ Two years later one of Germany's leading merchant bankers commented ironically on colonial investments: 'One could put them into the savings books of one's grandchildren.'¹¹ And the Silesian industrialist, Count Henckel von Donnersmarck, complained that 'the bankers have now learnt by experience to understand that colonial enterprises need a long time to become profitable'.¹² It seemed that the financiers conferred a favour on the colonial cause if and when they helped to finance colonial ventures. In these cases public opinion and government

⁷ N. Mashkin, 'La Russie et la Conférence de Berlin 1884/85', in *Asia—Africa—Latin America*, Special Issue 5, Berlin 1984, p. 53. However the French is not quite clear in Giers's report.

⁸ H. M. Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent; or the Sources of the Nile, around the Great Lakes of Equatorial Africa, and down the Livingstone River to the Atlantic Ocean*, 2 vols., New York 1878 (German edition, *Durch den dunklen Weltteil*, 2 vols., Leipzig 1878). H. M. Stanley, *The Congo: its History, Present Development, and Future Commercial Prospects*, London 1884. Stanley was called by a leading German geographer 'the Bismarck of African research'. A. Petermann, in *Petermanns Geographische Mitteilungen*,

1877, p. 467. F. Schulte-Althoff, *Studien zur politischen Wissenschaftsgeschichte der deutschen Geographie im Zeitalter des Imperialismus*, Paderborn 1971, p. 99.

⁹ Schulte-Althoff, *Studien*, pp. 113 ff.

¹⁰ Hohenlohe-Zentralarchiv, Archiv Langenburg, Prince zu Hohenlohe Papers, Box 162, Controversy Hohenlohe-Jannasch. See also Jannasch's article in *Export*, 24 Aug. 1886.

¹¹ Bank Archiv Oppenheim Cologne, 113, Schwabach to E. v. Oppenheim, 11 Mar. 1885.

¹² Bundesarchiv Koblenz, Palézieux Papers 3, Henckel to Palézieux, 5 June 1887.

policy provided stronger reasons for action than the search for maximizing profits. A case in point is the attitude of the banker Gerson von Bleichröder. Although he knew that African enterprises would not be profitable for a long time and although he made losses by putting up money for colonial companies, he was not a colonial enthusiast.¹³

Yet he consistently supported colonial efforts. Whatever the reasons Bleichröder's position near Bismarck and the German government made it obligatory for him to invest in colonial enterprises.¹⁴ It looks as if he had no choice if he wanted to keep his privileged position. Being near Bismarck and the German government easily outweighed the losses he may have made in colonial enterprises. But he was able to provide only small sums of money for colonial ventures. The risks and losses in colonial business could then be comfortably offset against more profitable ventures elsewhere.

There is no evidence to suggest that German businessmen or for that matter bankers of Bleichröder's calibre were concerned with the defence of a social or political status quo. They relied on a strong government and a practical constitution to serve their interests.¹⁵ The government had demonstrated shortly before its willingness to comply with the demands of the business community through two major pieces of legislation. Free trade was abolished in favour of protective tariffs and the anti-socialist legislation to keep the socialist movement under control. Obviously the potential for strengthening the interventionist state was not exhausted. However social legislation was not greeted with unanimous enthusiasm by business leaders.

The acquisition of overseas colonies can, however, be interpreted as another step in the direction of growing state interventionism, and this was widely welcome. Given that the colonial areas were economically underdeveloped, a difference of opinion existed between government and businessmen as to who was to provide the pioneer investments necessary to transform the colonies into propositions that were viable from a European point of view. Whereas Bismarck was for political reasons reluctant to put up the money, in later years the government did provide the funds for conquering the territories, subjugating the African population, installing a proper administration, and building up an infrastructure.

However the difference of opinion did not lead to a clash and there was sufficient common ground to go ahead with acquiring colonies in 1884-5. Moreover there was more important reasons than long-term economic ones for an overseas expansion at the time it happened. Members of the business world were as much subjected to nationalist pressures as the government itself. In a sense the former were even more part of it than the latter.

In any case nationalist ambitions seem to have been the more decisive factor in acquiring colonies than the demand for colonial sources of raw materials or nationally secured markets for German goods. Unless Germany could acquire an enormous colonial empire like India, the existing economic values of stretches in sub-Saharan Africa would be relatively low, whatever the future potential might be. If economic arguments were put forward in favour of even these colonial areas then they would have to serve as part of an economic rationalization process which was to give more

¹³ Bank Archiv Oppenheim Cologne, 112, Hanseemann to Oppenheim, 30 May 1884. F. Stern, *Gold and Iron: Bismarck, Bleichröder and the Building of the German Empire*, London 1977, pp. 412 ff.

¹⁴ Stern, *ibid.*, p. 416.

¹⁵ Bleichröder, for instance, believed that the suppression of the Social Democrats would suffice to create stability. *Ibid.*, p. 415.

weight to political arguments. As much as political action or inaction, as the case may be, is often justified today by referring to unemployment, the promotion of trade and investments took a similar position in the second half of the nineteenth century. Any colonial expansion in Africa could therefore be justified on economic grounds.

Thus any government in Germany which favoured a colonial initiative was faced with two major problems. Any expenditure would need the approval of the Reichstag and any territorial claim would need the agreement of the other powers involved. Whereas the latter could be solved diplomatically, the former needed political manoeuvring among the Reichstag parties. The government could do and did both, but behind it stood the growing pressure from nationally minded people who regarded the foundation of the German Empire only as the first step in making Germany into a leading world power. Coupled with this aspiration was the desire to imitate and later overtake Britain. Britain's political and economic power was generally attributed to her overseas empire. Colonies were regarded as an expression of power. For Germany colonies became the symbol of a nation's future greatness. The fear that Germany might sink again into a 'power lethargy' as in the years prior to the 1860s fuelled the wishes for a greater Germany overseas. Thus the German government was put under increasing pressure to demonstrate a dynamic attitude towards enlarging the Empire.

Empire building was not perceived in terms of creating an informal empire or increasing German investments abroad. Territory was considered to be the essential characteristic of a great or world power. Space and territory provided a basis for military strategies and territorial conquests were essential parts of military thinking which also pervaded society in general. In addition economists as well as merchants, industrialists, agrarians, and bankers regarded the occupation or possession of territory as important. The greater the area governed by a state the more substantial would be the economic and political benefits. Therefore it was held that newly gained territories would yield positive economic and political results sooner or later.

It has been pointed out that, according to contemporary views, colonial possessions could offset the effects of an economic depression, especially the depression of the 1870s. However if a newly gained territory were not developed economically it could not absorb manufactured goods in any worthwhile quantities nor could it export raw materials. However the very existence of investments indicated that the metropolitan economy might have been able to move out of the depression before the colonial investments could take effect. For colonial developments an infrastructure as well as investments, a full administration, which would cover all legal aspects as well, consumers, and finally a cheap labour force were all needed. Without any state intervention with provisions for political and legal security as well as for the beginnings of an infrastructure, larger companies would be reluctant to put up any substantial amounts of pioneer investments. German industrialists and bankers were in this respect not unique once colonies had been acquired. Percy Anderson, the head of the African Department in the British Foreign Office, commented on the reluctance of British investors in East Africa: 'The truth is that we not only do not neglect the Manchester interests, but have to stir Manchester up to look after its interests.'¹⁶ Harry Johnston complained about British merchants in the same way as Bismarck and

¹⁶ R. Louis, 'Great Britain and German Expansion in Africa, 1884-1919', in Gifford and Louis, *Britain and Germany in Africa*, pp. 3-46, here p. 14.

the colonial enthusiasts about the German businessmen. Johnston wrote: 'British merchants are the most unreasonable of men nowadays—They expect the Government to do everything for them and see no occasion for private enterprise of their own. What they would like is for huge territories . . . to be annexed, opened up, civilised, cleared, swept and garnished, and then handed over to them to ply a profitable and ready-made trade.'¹⁷

On the German side there is sufficient evidence to suggest that at the early state of colonialism investments by large enterprises were put up because of public pressure. It was something that had to be done if the colonial cause was to be supported for national reasons. This was an attitude which did not change much until later. Friedrich Fabri complained about the inertia of 'our financiers and capitalists' in colonial matters.¹⁸ This sentiment was shared by Bismarck as late as 1889.¹⁹ When he was forced to rescue the German East Africa Company in 1887 the Kaiser had to provide out of his own funds a sum of 500,000 marks which was not forthcoming from any other source.²⁰

The reluctance of German capitalists to invest in colonial enterprises had nothing to do with a shortage of capital. When, later, the government had established a full state-run administration and some basic infrastructure, private investments became available. The scepticism displayed by capitalists towards colonial enterprises made economic sense and it was naïve of men like Fabri and Bismarck to expect that capital would be available without state guarantees of profitability or public pioneer investments.

Even the Hamburg merchant, Adolph Woermann, the most important German shipping merchant in West Africa, but not a large operator compared with other German shipping firms, was clear about the desirability of a full state-run administration in German colonies.²¹ He had been instrumental in persuading some chambers of commerce and their national head organization to come out in favour of having colonies, but to let private capital or chartered companies run the colonies was, for him, not a viable option. He was very keen on state intervention and knew very well that the government would have to install a full state-run administration.

Yet the same businessmen who were either sceptical about the viability of colonial ventures or wanted the government to finance pioneer investments out of public funds believed that in the long run the Empire needed more space, that the German economy needed a larger national market and a national supply of raw materials and tropical goods. Bismarck was not such a convinced *laissez-faire* supporter that he could not accept this point, but public funding needed the approval of the Reichstag, that is to say he knew that colonial policy would become a party political issue. He was not encouraged in this direction by the refusal of the Reichstag to come to the rescue of the House of Godffroy by subsidizing its divided payments.²² Consequently any colonial venture had to be planned with as little public expenditure as possible. But when the

¹⁷ Ibid., Johnston to Anderson, 29 Oct. 1885.

¹⁸ Bade, *Fabri*, p. 252.

¹⁹ F. Fabri, *Fünf Jahre deutscher Kolonialpolitik*, Gotha 1889, pp. 21 ff. Zentrales Staatsarchiv Potsdam, Reichskanzlei 560, Bismarck's draft of the summer of 1889. It is published in O. von Bismarck, *Die gesammelten Werke*, 15 vols., Berlin 1935, vol. 6c, pp. 413 f. Bade, *Fabri*, p. 343.

²⁰ Bundesarchiv Koblenz, Palézieux Papers 1, Behr to Palézieux, 7 Feb. 1887. F. F. Müller, *Deutschland, Zanzibar, Ostafrika: Geschichte einer deutschen Kolonialeroberung 1884–1890*, Berlin 1959, pp. 160–76. Wehler, *Bismarck*, pp. 359 ff.

²¹ H. Washausen, *Hamburg und die Kolonialpolitik des Deutschen Reiches 1880 bis 1890*, Hamburg 1968, pp. 118 ff. and 138–54.

²² Ibid., pp. 26–34.

Reichstag was to be asked for funds, then Bismarck had to make sure that there would be sufficient support for the bill. After the elections of 1881 this was not the case so the right-wing parties had to be strengthened by utilizing the groundswell in support of colonies.²³ The effect of the Samoan Bill of 1880 was that it had stimulated the nationalist phantasy.²⁴ A new stage of development for the Reich seemed to become possible and this lifted nationalist expectations. It made political sense for the colonial cause to become a national issue which would especially help the National Liberals at the expense of the Left Liberals. So there were political advantages to be gained if the Chancellor embarked on colonial policy. But an entry into the colonial field needed careful political preparations. This was not to establish any primacy of power politics over economics. All it shows is the complex character of the decisions which formed the basis of a new departure in German politics in 1884. For the chancellor it was important to point to the political and economic pressure when he renewed his efforts in colonial policy and when he abandoned his dictum of 1871 in which he had declared that Germany was a satiated power.

Colonial expansion had been on the agenda of the national movement since before the 1848 revolution.²⁵ The process of unification, however, pushed the question of an overseas Germany temporarily into the background. Only when Austria-Hungary was separated from the new German Empire, when the hinterland of the industrializing German North was curtailed at the German-Austrian borders, did economic and political interests gain a stronger overseas dimension.²⁶ The question of trade, trading posts, and eventually overseas territorial acquisitions influenced the political discussions more and more. As long as German conquests in Europe were ruled out because of the risk of war the new German Empire was, so to speak, pushed outwards.

As might be expected the National Liberals stood behind all of these issues. From a tactical point of view it was obvious that the colonial question should be exploited to bolster up the National Liberals, who, after the secession of 1880 (in which the left wing left the party) and the defeat in the Reichstag polls in 1881, needed to be strengthened. Under the leadership of Miquel the party had moved to the right and the colonial question looked to be a promising one for the purpose of bringing back the party at the elections of 1884 to rejoin the Bismarckian camp. So both the Chancellor and the National Liberal Party had a common interest in using the colonial issue for their political ends. In this vein the Chancellor had suggested to the National Liberals 'that they should jump back into the arena'.²⁷ A little later he stressed the 'necessary rapprochement with the National Liberals with whom he could govern again after an interval of six years' until they became again 'too strong and too demanding'.²⁸ The National Liberals on the other hand saw in the pursuit of colonial policy the chance to restore the party to its former glories. Miquel wanted to give the party a new national

²³ Bade, *Fabri*, pp. 146-51, 153.

²⁴ See the article on renewed German nationalist hopes in *Im neuen Reich: Wochenschrift*, 10 (1880), pp. 859-67.

²⁵ H. Fenske, 'Imperialistische Tendenzen in Deutschland vor 1866: Auswanderung, überseeische Bestrebungen, Weltmachtträume', in *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 98 (1978), pp. 337-83.

²⁶ G. Wollstein, *Das 'Großdeutschland' der Paulskirche: Nationale Ziele in der bürgerlichen Revolution 1848/49*,

Düsseldorf 1977, pp. 291-306. Even as late as 1849 the *kleindeutsche* solution was only regarded as a temporary measure. There was agreement in Frankfurt that Germany's future lay in South Eastern Europe. So in a way overseas expansion was to compensate for the missing hinterland in South East Europe.

²⁷ Pogge von Strandmann, 'Domestic Origins', pp. 144 f.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 145. Bade, *Fabri*, pp. 234 ff. and p. 171.

goal and his friend Benningsen hoped to use colonial policy for the reduction of the various factions within the party. The South German party member Friedrich Ratzel welcomed colonial policy as being most advantageous to the revival of the National Liberals.²⁹

The government had already tried to help certain parties in some of the elections. In the run-up to the elections of 1881 the government had supported the National Liberals under Benningsen and Miquel asking in return that they give up the plan to found one big liberal party.³⁰ As the elections of 1881 turned out to be a disaster for the National Liberals a similar fate had to be avoided in 1884. So a national cause had to be found if the National Liberal voters were to vote for the party again. Colonial policy seemed to be a worthwhile national issue which would benefit the National Liberals electorally. But on this occasion Bismarck was not ready to take action until widespread national support for colonial policy had been demonstrated. Only then would the government be prepared to seize the initiative and acquire colonial possessions. This had to happen before the elections of 1884 so that the National Liberals and Free Conservatives would benefit. Bismarck also started a propaganda campaign in which he criticized the anticolonial attitude of the Left Liberals.³¹

The arguments used by the right-wing parties and the government emphasized the economic advantages of colonial possessions. The political motives were not discussed in public at the same length, but they were known to most participants in the political debate. In addition, economic reasoning was to provide the rational cover for rather vague and irrational aspirations to power. Economic arguments were to enhance the credibility of expansionism. Concern for the national economy became an overriding motive against which it was difficult for the political opponents of imperialism to argue.

Bismarck's demand for popular support for the colonial cause coincided with Miquel's and Benningsen's plan to set up an extra-parliamentary association to put pressure on the Reichstag and its parties. There was a precedent for this strategy. The successful campaign for the introduction of protective tariffs in the mid-seventies was organized on similar lines. There were even plans to found a new party for the political centre for which colonial policy was to be the focus.³² As the employers were to play a crucial role in this new party, colonial policy was also seen as a substitute for the higher costs the business community had to face because of social legislation. While the National Liberal leaders were able to gather support for their plans they realized that they were not the first in the field as far as pressure groups were concerned.

The first group to be founded after the failure of the Samoan Bill of 1880 was the *Westdeutscher Verein für Colonisation und Export* (WV).³³ It concentrated its efforts on the two western provinces Rhineland and Westphalia. However its appeal was limited and Bismarck was supposed to have considered its leadership to be weak.³⁴ In the summer

²⁹ Ibid., p. 235.

³⁰ Zentrales Staatsarchiv Merseburg, II Rep. 90a, Meeting of the Ministry of State, 25 June 1880.

³¹ Wehler, *Bismarck*, pp. 475 ff., 479.

³² Hohenlohe-Zentralarchiv, Archiv Langenburg, Prince Hermann zu Hohenlohe Papers, Box 159, Miquel to Hohenlohe, 19 Apr. 1884. See also the *Historisch-Politische Blätter für das katholische Deutschland* 94 (1884), p. 937.

³³ Bade, *Fabri*, pp. 136-43.

³⁴ H. v. Poschinger, *Fürst Bismarck und die Parlamentarier*, 3 vols., Breslau 1896, vol. 3, p. 106. Obviously Bismarck had a low regard for Fabri. In 1880 he let Kusserow know that 'he did not have much confidence in Mr. Fabri nor in his plans'. H. Drechsler, *Südwestafrika unter deutscher Kolonialherrschaft: Der Kampf der Herero und Nama gegen den deutschen Imperialismus, 1884-1915*, Berlin 1984, 2nd edn., p. 31.

of 1882 a new initiative originated from Frankfurt where Prince von Hohenlohe-Langenburg, a Free Conservative, Miquel who was then Mayor of Frankfurt, and Freiherr von Maltzan, a Mecklenburgian landowner who had travelled in West Africa, launched the *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft* on a national basis.³⁵ The driving force behind the venture appears to have been Maltzan who claimed a year later that the *Kolonialgesellschaft* was his brainchild.³⁶ He was also responsible for pushing the question of emigration into the background during the autumn of 1882, a line which found support with the Crown Prince. Maltzan also managed to canvass Hohenlohe, who had similar plans, to draft the proclamation of August 1882.³⁷ However the political heavyweight in this group was Miquel who succeeded in using the *Kolonialgesellschaft* for his party politics. Thus the purpose of the *Kolonialgesellschaft* was political in the first instance.³⁸ Colonial projects and the question of colonial acquisitions were to be approached later.³⁹

The next two steps the founding members were faced with were to win a number of influential personalities for the *Kolonialgesellschaft* and to join forces with the WV. The latter project would have been easier if the driving personality behind the WV, Fabri, had been more acceptable to the Frankfurt group. Thus the leaders of that group sighed with relief when the colonial activist, Hübbe-Schleiden, managed to persuade Fabri not to stand for the vice-presidency of the *Kolonialgesellschaft* once the terms for co-operation had been agreed.⁴⁰

The campaign to win influential personalities and notables was successful although some refused and others could not join because of their position. Among the latter was Prince zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst who was ambassador in Paris and later became Chancellor in 1894.⁴¹ Although he turned down the request to join, he welcomed the foundation of the nationally based *Kolonialgesellschaft*. In his letter to his cousin Hohenlohe-Langenburg, who was to become the first president of the association, he recognized the rapidly growing problem of overpopulation, as he called it, but was not sure whether this problem could be solved by directing the flow of emigration into future German colonies. To him colonial possessions would put a strain on the resources of the armed forces as they would not be available for the defence of Germany against East and West. Instead army and navy would have to protect the colonies 'against the savages' and against those powers 'which would be envious of our colonies'. The international situation would change if Germany became a colonial power. He was also wary of the costs which Germany would incur if it took over a country like India, Algeria, or Canada. He was sceptical that areas of that size were available. 'Guinea was plagued by heat, Samoa by elephantiasis and West Africa by

³⁵ The subject has been well researched. A reference to Wehler, *Bismarck*, pp. 162-8 and Bade, *Fabri*, pp. 169-81 may suffice.

³⁶ Hohenlohe-Zentralarchiv, Archiv Langenburg, Prince Hermann zu Hohenlohe Papers, Box 160, Maltzan to Hohenlohe, 4 Dec. 1883.

³⁷ Ibid., Box 159, Hohenlohe to Brüggem, Aug. 1882. Hohenlohe had a letter from the Crown Prince in which the latter approved of the intended foundation of the *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft*. See also K. Klauß, 'Die Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft und die deutsche Kolonialpolitik—von den Anfängen bis 1895', unpub. diss., East

Berlin 1966, p. 107.

³⁸ Hohenlohe-Zentralarchiv, Archiv Langenburg, Prince Hermann zu Hohenlohe Papers, Box 159, Miquel to Hohenlohe, 19 Apr. 1884.

³⁹ Ibid., Hohenlohe to the Grand Duke of Baden, 26 Dec. 1882. Hohenlohe also wanted the Grand Duke to become a patron of the *Kolonialgesellschaft*, but he declined.

⁴⁰ Ibid., Hübbe-Schleiden to Hohenlohe, 8 Dec. 1882.

⁴¹ Ibid., Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst to Hohenlohe, 17 Oct. 1882. Hohenlohe-Langenburg had written to Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst on 3 Oct. Wehler, *Bismarck*, p. 163.

Kafirs as well as sand.' He did not want to give the impression of being anticolonial, but thought that trading posts under the 'protection of the Reich' would be desirable and sufficient. He realized that this would not solve the emigration problem. He did not object to emigration because the alternative would be 'pauperization', but as long as there were no German colonies which could absorb emigrants 'individual emigration would have to continue'. Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst's cautious line may have satisfied the Frankfurt group but would have disappointed any colonial enthusiast. Because of this political realism he suggested at the end of his letter that he was going to find out what Bismarck's reaction was to the foundation of the *Kolonialgesellschaft*. He must have been aware that it was essential for the founders of the *Kolonialgesellschaft* to know Bismarck's reactions in order to see their political intentions work. He probably knew that his cousin had tried to find out Bismarck's reaction. Hohenlohe-Langenburg had felt frustrated about the Chancellor's lack of enthusiasm for colonial policy. 'His farsighted, statesmanlike intellect', he wrote to a co-founder, 'must see insurmountable obstacles which stop him throwing his authority behind colonial policy. For us who are convinced of the necessity of colonies for the existence of our nation this issue is beyond doubt. Those classes which are suitable for colonization shrink in numbers from year to year. And I am obsessed by a certain fear that Germany might realize too late how much she is in need of colonies.'⁴² Hohenlohe-Langenburg was however convinced that, given time, the state would have no choice but to support the colonial cause. He realized that he needed a mediator in order to influence Bismarck.

He thought Kusserow might be the right person although to his mind he had lacked skill when he handled the Samoa Bill in the Reichstag in 1880. He also knew that Bismarck was fully occupied with the Egyptian question. So he concluded that Bismarck ought not to be officially notified of the foundation of the *Kolonialgesellschaft*. Despite his misgivings about the qualities of Kusserow he thought that he ought to be made use of in the first instance as he was a fervent supporter of the colonial cause.⁴³ The formula with which the government was to be indirectly approached was that the *Kolonialgesellschaft* was in favour of establishing trading posts under the 'protection of the Reich'.

Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst had already mentioned this idea, but whereas he was convinced that this was the only suitable colonial policy, Hohenlohe-Langenburg on the other hand regarded this formula as a tactical ploy to attract the Chancellor to the colonial cause. To him the ultimate aim was the acquisition of colonial territories, and trading posts under the protection of the *Reich* might be a good starting point for that. Although Bismarck accepted this formula in 1884-5 he cannot have been under any illusions about the ultimate intentions of those who were keen supporters of colonial policy. That is to say that once trading posts had been established under the 'protection' of the Reich it was a question of time as to when they would be enlarged territorially. These implications worried Bismarck for two reasons. First colonial territories would eventually need to be administered and he could not be sure that the financial burden of the administration would be borne by private investors. Secondly the

⁴² Hohenlohe-Zentralarchiv, Archiv Langenburg, Prince Hermann zu Hohenlohe Papers, Box 159, Hohenlohe to Brüggem, Aug. 1882.

⁴³ Klauf, 'Kolonialgesellschaft', p. 107. Bade, *Fabri*, p. 175.

acquisition of colonial territories might lead to international confrontations. The Russian Foreign Minister, Giers, suggested in his report on the Berlin Conference to Alexander III that Bismarck used the formula of 'protectorates' in 1884 to avoid any serious clash with Britain and France when Germany became a colonial power. 'Protectorates' sounded less committed than colonies.⁴⁴

Given Bismarck's reluctance the task of establishing a line of communication with him was of primary importance for the Frankfurt group. So far it is not known whether there was a meeting between Bismarck and Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst or any other leading political figure and the Chancellor with regard to colonial matters in the autumn of 1882. But even if such a meeting had taken place it is unlikely that Bismarck would have committed himself, a line which the Crown Prince pursued as well when he turned down the suggestion that he should act as a patron for the *Kolonialgesellschaft*.

But two years later Hohenlohe-Langenburg admitted that the German Foreign Office had reacted positively to the foundation of the association and the formula.⁴⁵ So instead of a direct approach it seems likely that the Chancellor was made aware through Foreign Office channels. In the manifesto Hohenlohe-Langenburg circulated before the association was formally founded he did not address himself to emigration as the most important question.⁴⁶ Instead he referred to overcrowding generally and to the over-supply of professional people in particular for which colonial policy would find some relief. In the document the usual economic arguments were put forward and it was also mentioned that the *Kolonialgesellschaft* should provide a national focus for all colonial efforts. Finally it was made clear that the association would not reckon with any material support from the government, but 'would try to attract in suitable cases governmental protection for German enterprises to fend off any foreign intervention'.⁴⁷ 'Protection' was made out to be the precondition of any successful operation of such enterprises.

It looks as if the authors of the manifesto had Bismarck's opinion in mind when this particular passage was drafted. Whether they had received any unofficial hint as to what was acceptable remains open, but already in Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst's letter this scheme was mentioned. By the time the first meeting took place in Frankfurt on 6 December no official comment had been received from the Chancellery. Yet in December a link with Kusserow in the Foreign Office had been established.⁴⁸

In his opening speech at the Frankfurt meeting Maltzan underlined the cautious approach the association wanted to take towards colonization, thus indirectly confirming the mainly political purpose of founding the association.⁴⁹ But he stressed the 'national need' for the possession of colonies and the fact that they should be acquired without incurring the hostility of any of the other powers. He realized that colonial possessions were for some 'the incarnation of German world domination' whereas others only foresaw internal and external political complications.

Maltzan's cautious approach was not followed by others. For instance the shipping magnate Meier from Bremen spoke out against setting up more German trading posts.

⁴⁴ Mashkin, 'La Russie', pp. 54 f.

⁴⁵ Klauß, 'Kolonialgesellschaft', pp. 107 f.

⁴⁶ The manifesto was not published but circulated confidentially. See Bade, *Fabri*, p. 171.

⁴⁷ Hohenlohe-Zentralarchiv, Archiv Langenburg, Prince Hermann zu Hohenlohe Papers, Box 159, Sept.

1882.

⁴⁸ In October Kusserow had been approached, but no immediate answer is recorded. But contracts had been established between them later in October and December. Klauß, 'Kolonialgesellschaft', p. 107.

⁴⁹ *Frankfurter Journal*, 6 Dec. 1882 (afternoon).

He believed that there were enough and therefore pleaded rather for colonial acquisitions.⁵⁰ But no practical measures were undertaken. The *Kolonialgesellschaft* was a pressure group which tried to impress the public, win over the Reichstag, and prepare the political ground for envisaged governmental actions. Thus Count Arnim von Boitzenburg described the function of the association as a 'link between the imperial government and any developing enterprises as well as those groups which showed an interest in the colonial cause'.⁵¹

At the end of December 1882 Hohenlohe-Langenburg was satisfied with the reaction he had received after the launching of the association. He was especially pleased that 'national thoughts still had a stimulating effect upon our people'.⁵² Miquel on the other hand hoped that the National Liberals would benefit and that it might be possible to launch a new inter-party grouping. Thus the *Cartel* of 1887, the party coalition of National Liberals, Free Conservatives, and the Conservatives had its origins in the grouping which emerged through the support of colonial policy.

The effects of the growing propaganda campaign and the changing climate in the Chancellery were soon to be felt. In January 1883 Adolf Lüderitz was invited to Berlin and when he requested general protection for his trading post in South West Africa Bismarck started his diplomatic campaign by trying to establish whether Britain had any acceptable claims over Angra Pequena or not.⁵³ Obviously he wanted to declare a 'protectorate' if possible. Incompetence on the British side and the lack of knowledge about the changing political climate in Germany led to an underestimation of Bismarck's intentions. In addition to the ensuing diplomatic dispute over Angra Pequena there was the German opposition to the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty. The growing rivalry in South West and West Africa as well as the mobilization of international opposition against British high-handedness when the agreement was concluded with Portugal over the mouth of the Congo, led to the German declaration of 'protection' in Togoland, the Cameroons, and South West Africa and to the build-up to the Berlin Conference. However unwillingly Bismarck had made the declarations of protection he was well aware that the setting-up of Germany's colonial empire was a new departure in German politics. Germany had joined the imperialist powers.

The final steps were taken in early 1884. Between the middle and the end of April 1884 the instructions to Nachtigal, the German commissioner sent to West Africa, made it clear that he was to secure territorial possessions for Germany by hoisting the German flag. At the same time the idea of a conference was mooted by Bismarck to discuss the situation of the Congo and the Niger.⁵⁴ The two related initiatives did not imply that Bismarck wanted to seize land in the Congo Basin as well. He was not really interested in the Congo, but found it convenient to exploit Leopold's desire to gain international recognition for his so-called state in the Congo Basin for his own diplomacy. The main purpose in convening a conference in Berlin was to prevent any growth in animosity towards Germany becoming a colonial power and to gain

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Hohenlohe-Zentralarchiv, Archiv Langenburg, Prince Hermann zu Hohenlohe Papers, Box 159, Arnim-Boitzenburg to Hohenlohe, 19 Oct. 1882.

⁵² Ibid., Hohenlohe to the Grand Duke of Baden, 26 Dec. 1882.

⁵³ The subject has been well researched. Instead of a

comprehensive bibliography, see J. H. Esterhuysen, *South West Africa 1880-1894: The Establishment of German Authority in South West Africa*, Cape Town 1968, pp. 46-87. Drechsler, *Südwestafrika*, pp. 27-39.

⁵⁴ H. Loth, 'Deutschland und das "Humanitätsmandat" des Kongostaates 1884-1908', unpub. MS (Habilitation), Rostock 1964, pp. 31-78.

recognition as a world power. The Berlin Conference was to be the crowning of Germany's first colonial efforts. The *Preussische Jahrbücher* got it right when they expressed the national pride associated with the Conference. 'Germany has become a leading power', the paper stated, 'in organizing a European link to a strange continent. That is more than could ever be expected in the most audacious dreams, which were dreamt during the period of national humiliation, about Germany's future grandeur. [It was amazing] what had been achieved within twenty years!'⁵⁵

The Berlin Conference was made possible by a temporary Franco-German *entente*. When the French government signalled to Bismarck in May 1884 that 'we can go hand in hand with regard to the West Africa coast because our interests there are the same,' the German government seized the opportunity to neutralize stronger British opposition to Germany's colonial venture by siding with France and turning against Portugal and at the same time recognizing Leopold's *Association Internationale du Congo*.⁵⁶ Britain would be forced to upstage Germany as a colonial power if it accepted the idea of a conference. If Britain decided not to do so then she would have escalated the rivalries in West Africa and possibly also increased her difficulties over Egypt. Compared with these risks the diplomatic tensions with Germany over her territorial bids and the recognition of Leopold's state in Central Africa were the lesser evils. In addition Britain could not abstain from the planned conference as Portugal was pressing for it as well after the British government, in the face of internal and international opposition, had decided not to present the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty to Parliament.

The call for a conference suited both Powers, Germany and France, but the idea of a conference did not originate in the foreign ministries of either country.⁵⁷ In the autumn of 1883 the *Institut du Droit International* discussed the situation in the region of the Congo at length. The French delegate, Moynier, who had already suggested this idea to the same forum in 1878, came out in favour of neutralizing the Congo region and installing international control. Moynier submitted a memorandum which contained nearly all the clauses which were later to be included in the Congo Act. However, it was felt at the institute that his proposals went too far.⁵⁸ Instead it was resolved that his memorandum was to be sent to all governments and that the members should each try to win at least one major power for calling an international conference. Bearing in mind that the German Foreign Office and the French Foreign Ministry were each dominated by trained lawyers it is not difficult to imagine that the institute's suggestions were taken up.

If the institute can be credited with doing a fair amount of the preparatory work it does not follow that the governments put into practice all its stipulations.⁵⁹ In a way the

⁵⁵ *Preussische Jahrbücher*, 54 (1884), p. 478.

⁵⁶ Loth, *Kongostaat*, p. 63. The French document is dated 18 May 1884, Zentrales Staatsarchiv Potsdam, RKo 1A 9041.

⁵⁷ G. Moynier, *Annuaire de l'Institut de Droit International, Session de Bruxelles*, 1885, pp. 237 f.

⁵⁸ G. Moynier, 'Proposition concernant le Congo', in *Annuaire de l'Institut de Droit International, Session de Munich 1883*, Brussels 1885, pp. 237 f.

⁵⁹ The more recent publications on the Berlin Conference include Wehler, *Bismarck*, pp. 380-90; J. Grube, *Bismarcks Politik in Europa und Übersee: Seine*

'Annäherung' an Frankreich im Urteil der Pariser Presse (1883-1885), Berlin 1975, pp. 82-102. See now H. Stoecker, 'The Berlin Conference on the Partition of Africa 1884-1885: Some Observations', in *African Studies*, Berlin 1983, pp. 111-23. H. Stoecker, 'Die Berliner Konferenz 1884/85 und die koloniale Aufteilung Afrikas', in *Asien-Afrika-Lateinamerika*, special issue, 5, Berlin 1984, pp. 888-9. K. Canis, 'Zu den Motiven der Bismarckschen Kolonialpolitik', in *Die koloniale Aufteilung Afrikas und ihre Folgen: Berichte der Humboldt-Universität*, 7 (1985), pp. 4-11.

Conference paid only lip-service to the suggestion of establishing free trade in West Africa and in the Congo Basin. Instead nationally secured monopolies were put up under the banner of free trade. The participants talked about free trade without knowing any better, probably because of the liberal government in Britain and the liberal parties in Germany and France. In that sense the Berlin Conference was nothing more than an exercise in public relations. As Germany gained the desired recognition for her colonial venture by convening the Conference, the government could now have moved faster towards a fully fledged colonial policy. However this would have spoiled the Anglo-German accord at the end of the Berlin Conference. In addition it could have increased international friction. Furthermore the government had an interest in delaying the installation of a proper colonial administration because the elections of 1884 had not created a safe majority for the government in the Reichstag.

✓ It would have been difficult to justify public expenditure for a venture which was economically unimportant and where it would be a considerable time before larger private investments were available. The obvious solution for Bismarck was to ask the merchant houses concerned to put up the money for the administration during the initial stages of colonialism. But this did not work since their request for 'protection' aimed at a stronger state involvement which would lead to a state-run colony. So the burgeoning interventionist state was assigned the role by them which Bismarck refused to play for political reasons, at least at the beginning of Germany's colonial venture.⁶⁰

If Bismarck had been the committed anticolonialist that some of his utterances seemed to suggest, then there would have been no incentive to declare a 'protectorate' over the East African coast and New Guinea as well. However he seized the opportunity right after the Berlin Conference had ended. Without holding the Conference in Berlin this would have been far more difficult to achieve. The Conference was the best vehicle for Bismarck to launch Germany's colonial claims and gain international approval for the 1884 and 1885 acquisitions. In this sense the Conference has to be regarded as the peak of Bismarck's colonial achievements.

Although Germany's entry into the colonial field paid handsome political dividends, the advantages were only short-lived. After March 1885 the Chancellor began to fear the growing external risks were he to continue to acquire further colonial territories. The more reluctant he became the more difficult it was to fend off the requests of the colonial enthusiasts. In the end they turned against him and the colonial lobby contributed a great deal to his downfall in 1890.⁶¹

Bismarck's reaction to colonial pressure seems to have come in three stages. The first one was in the autumn of 1882 when the colonial movement gained in momentum after the foundation of the *Kolonialgesellschaft*. In one way or another he took note of the growing public pressure which, after the Samoan débâcle, was a precondition to any future action in the colonial field. During the second phase in 1883 he tested the international ground and learned how to run possible colonial acquisitions cheaply. Meanwhile the *Kolonialgesellschaft* continued to act as a centre for colonial ambitions.

⁶⁰ See for the struggle between the colonial interests concerned and the German government between 1885 and 1914 the forthcoming study by H. Pogge von Strandmann, *Imperialismus am Grünen Tisch: Der Kolonialrat*

und seine politische und wirtschaftliche Bedeutung, 1885-1914.

⁶¹ Pogge von Strandmann, 'Domestic Origins', pp. 151-9. Bade, *Fabri*, pp. 315-50.

Yet internally the association went through something of a crisis which led to Maltzan's resignation on the one hand and to a strengthening of the concern over emigration on the other, which was supported by Fabri.⁶² The third phase began when Bismarck felt it necessary to opportune to 'protect' German enterprises in West and South West Africa. Kusserow later wrote that Bismarck has asked him to report directly to him in colonial matters at the beginning of 1884.⁶³ Kusserow himself was very grateful for the direct and indirect support he had received from the *Kolonialgesellschaft* in preparing the ground. It looks as if Bismarck reacted in being manipulated rather than the other way round. In any case political capital was to be made from pursuing a national cause. The National Liberals and the government hoped to benefit from the inauguration of colonial policy in the elections of October 1884. This worked to some extent, but the National Liberals did not manage to regain their former strength. But Bismarck needed the National Liberals in order to pass increased agrarian tariffs through the Reichstag in 1885. It was hoped that the acquisition of colonies would somehow demonstrate that the government was equally concerned about increasing the export chances for German industry at a time when Bismarck planned to impose higher grain tariffs. After all Bismarck is on record as having said: 'At the head of our industry is the export industry.'⁶⁴ Although this was one of Bismarck's concerns it could not apply to the colonies in the short term because the markets there could not yet absorb industrial goods. Only after public investments had been made was there a chance of subsequent private capital being invested. Thus the economic arguments for colonial expansion would only be valid in the distant future.

It is interesting to note that the expression of nationalism posed dangers for the existence of the Reich. But this did not seem to worry the Chancellor. In fact he failed to appreciate the future effects of Germany's *Weltpolitik* on her position in Europe. Only Russia seems to have been happy with Germany's new departure because the Russian government hoped that the German pressure on Russia's western boundaries would be eased.⁶⁵

Colonial expansion was regarded as an inevitable although belated consequence of the foundation of the German Empire. Also in this respect Bismarck acted as the executor of earlier nationalist dreams. But colonial expansion was not part of a Grand Design, neither in foreign nor in domestic politics. It followed from the foundation of an empire. Social imperialist explanations on the other hand do not seem to fit this case. It was not intended that colonial policy should stabilize the Bismarckian type of rule nor does any reference to a crisis strategy make sense. Within an economic framework which focused on the distant future and which provided rational arguments for colonial expansion, nationalist ambitions were being fulfilled at a time when the foreign

⁶² Hohenlohe-Zentralarchiv, Archiv Langenburg, Prince Hermann zu Hohenlohe Papers, Box 160, Maltzan to Hohenlohe, 4 Dec. 1883. Maltzan admitted that his programme had a more conservative character but a stronger integrative effect. Maltzan resigned because of the Paraguay Project which had been accepted by the association's presidium. Hohenlohe and Miquel seemed to support Maltzan, but this was not sufficient. Bade, *Fabri*, pp. 181-5.

⁶³ Hohenlohe-Zentralarchiv, Archiv Langenburg,

Prince Hermann zu Hohenlohe Papers, Box 247, Kusserow to Hohenlohe, 21 Nov. 1899.

⁶⁴ H. Kohl (ed.), *Die politischen Reden des Fürsten Bismarck*, 14 vols., Stuttgart 1902, vol. 10, p. 436 (15 Jan. 1885). It is interesting that Bismarck did not refer in this social-political speech to the colonies or colonial policy at all. Instead he emphasized how much workers could benefit from trade generally.

⁶⁵ Mashkin, 'La Russie', p. 54.

situation was favourable and when short-term political advantages were to be gained. There was no primacy of economic, foreign political, or domestic motives. A categorization along these lines does not fit the situation. The upstaging of minor economic interests served as a basis for colonial acquisitions. This has very little to do with informal empire-building or the peripheral interpretation of imperialism. Germany imitated other great powers in order to join them in this respect as well. The declarations of 'protection' were symptomatic of the growth of the interventionist state. The government indicated its willingness to play a more active role in supporting the national economy even in remote fields as far away as West and East Africa. This was not done to help the African Economy. The future-orientated economic exploitation was to help the metropolitan economy and thus to boost the ambitions of Germany as a world power. For Bismarck himself it was as Count Münster wrote: 'Bismarck had embarked upon and pursued colonial policy against his conviction in order to become popular or rather to maintain "his" popularity.'⁶⁶ His colonial coup spanned the years from 1882 until the Berlin Conference came to an end in 1885 and the 'protectorates' in East Africa as well as New Guinea had been added. The Samoan Bill, although a failure, had raised the expectations of an active colonial policy. The chancellor had to take note of the growing pressure among his strongest supporters. The process of setting up the *Kolonialgesellschaft* during the summer and autumn of 1882 was crucial in as far as a renewed attempt was made feasible to enter the colonial stage. The rest was, during the following months, a mixture of seized opportunities, gained advantages, and political stage management.

In October 1912 the *Konservative Monatsschrift* regarded the coming war as Germany's world historical masterpiece.⁶⁷ Perhaps it is possible to call the previous inauguration of Germany's overseas imperialism thirty years earlier her journeyman-work. It was a signal to open the road to expansion. As early as 1871 the founding of the Second Empire could, within this analogy, be defined as a process in which Germany served her modern world historical apprenticeship. Industrialization and burgeoning nationalism, the separation from Austria-Hungary and the unification under Prussian military and economic predominance led to a multifaceted expansion process which had reached a new stage in the early 1880s, culminating in the colonial acquisitions of 1884-5.

⁶⁶ Politisches Archiv Bonn, England 78, sect. iii, Münster to Holstein, 13 Jan. 1896.

⁶⁷ *Konservative Monatsschrift*, Oct. 1912.

Imperial Germany and West Africa: Colonial Movement, Business Interests, and Bismarck's 'Colonial Policies'*

KLAUS J. BADE

1. COLONIAL MOVEMENT IN GERMANY AND GERMAN 'SCHUTZERKLÄRUNGEN' IN AFRICA

The *Schutzerklärungen* (declarations of 'protection') of 1884-5 which opened German colonial history in Africa were preceded by five years of large-scale propaganda campaigns designed to popularize expansionism and colonialism in Germany. These efforts began in 1879, at the end of the first and most severe recession within a stretch of uncertain and intermittent economic growth that had started in 1873 and lasted into the mid-1890s, with repercussions on the labour market since the mid-1870s.¹ The most important author of colonialist and expansionist propaganda at this time was the mission inspector Dr Friedrich Fabri, soon to become known as the 'father of the German colonial movement'.² From 1857 to 1884 he had directed the largest Protestant missionary society in Germany, the *Rheinische Mission* in Barmen, which had been active in South West Africa since the 1840s. Fabri's first colonial propaganda pamphlet, published in 1879, opened a broad public debate on the question: 'Does Germany need colonies?'³ Since 1879 the Hamburg lawyer and political economist Dr Wilhelm Hübbe-Schleiden had co-operated with Fabri in promoting expansionism; soon he also joined in the pro-colonial publicity campaign. Hübbe-Schleiden had originally been an attaché at the German consulate general in London. From 1875 to 1877 he had tried his luck as a trader in West Equatorial Africa; returning ruined from Gabon in 1878, he attempted to make a fresh start as a highly prolific writer.⁴ Independently of Fabri and Hübbe-Schleiden, Ernst von Weber, who owned a manor

* Translated by Angela Davies.

¹ H.-U. Wehler, *Bismarck und der Imperialismus*, Munich 1976, 4th edn., pp. 61-95 (1st edn. Cologne 1969); H. Rosenberg, *Große Depression und Bismarckzeit: Wirtschaftsablauf, Gesellschaft und Politik in Mitteleuropa*, Berlin 1967; cf. K. J. Bade, 'Transnationale Migration und Arbeitsmarkt im Kaiserreich: Vom Agrarstaat mit starker Industrie zum Industriestaat mit starker agrarischer Basis', in T. Pierrenkemper and R. Tilly (eds.), *Historische Arbeitsmarktforschung*, Göttingen 1982, pp. 182-211; on the long controversy about the 'Great Depression' (H. Rosenberg), see S. B. Saul, *The Myth of the Great Depression*, London 1972.

² *Illustrierte Zeitung*, 1 Aug. 1891, p. 129.

³ F. Fabri, *Bedarf Deutschland der Colonien? Eine politisch-ökonomische Betrachtung*, Gotha 1884, 3rd edn. (1st

edn. Gotha 1879); cf. K. J. Bade, *Friedrich Fabri und der Imperialismus in der Bismarckzeit: Revolution—Depression—Expansion*, Freiburg 1975, list of Fabri's publications on pp. 524-8; id., 'Zwischen Mission und Kolonialbewegung, Kolonialwirtschaft und Kolonialpolitik in der Bismarckzeit: der Fall Friedrich Fabri', in: id. (ed.), *Imperialismus und Kolonialmission: Kaiserliches Deutschland und koloniales Imperium*, Wiesbaden 1984, 2nd edn., pp. 103-41 (1st edn. Wiesbaden 1982).

⁴ W. Hübbe-Schleiden, *Ethiopien: Studien über Westafrika*, Hamburg 1879; id., 'Motive zu einer überseeischen Politik Deutschlands', *Kölnische Zeitung*, 4 Aug. 1881 and elsewhere (reprinted in Bade, *Fabri*, pp. 147-9); on Hübbe-Schleiden see Bade, *Fabri*, pp. 97-102 and 143-220.

in Saxony, also worked to publicize expansionism and colonialism. Von Weber had spent the years from 1871 to 1875 in South Africa, where he owned mines, as a diamond speculator; he had repeatedly suggested plans for German colonial expansion in South East Africa to the German foreign ministry as well as in the press.⁵

The arguments used in expansionist and colonialist propaganda drew heavily upon the combined public impact of four collective and contrasting experiences: (1) the national euphoria created by the foundation of the Reich in 1871; (2) the shock of the economic crisis in 1873, following the boom period which had lasted since 1871; (3) the disproportion, enhanced by the crisis, between explosive population growth and interrupted economic growth;⁶ and (4) a latent fear of revolution, related to two factors: first, the unsolved 'social question', created by transition from an agrarian to an industrial economy and exacerbated most recently by the crisis; and secondly, the growth of political socialism, which the *Gesetz gegen die gemeingefährlichen Bestrebungen der Sozialdemokratie*, the infamous Anti-Socialist Law passed in 1879, was intended to combat. Consequently, discussion of colonialism centred on four broad conceptual areas, in varying order of importance: (1) nation and power; (2) economy and foreign trade; (3) population and emigration; (4) social tensions and problems of domestic policy. The interplay between these areas was to determine fantasies of national consummation and of curing the socio-economic crisis by founding a 'second' Reich overseas, especially by acquiring a sort of German 'India' on the 'Dark Continent'.⁷

The secret of the colonial propaganda's success lay in its mixture of complexity and simplicity: it evoked all the national, economic, and social problems of the day and demolished any imaginable internal solutions, thus leaving just one way out—a supposed panacea for all national and political, all economic, demographic, and 'social' ills: colonial expansion. Trading colonies in Africa would ensure export markets for German manufactures; plantation and mining colonies would provide a source of cheap raw materials for import. Boosting exports by means of colonial expansion would, it was argued, be using market forces to overcome the economic recession—perceived as a crisis produced by overproduction, or perhaps by a slump in sales—that had held on since 1873. This, it was hoped, would lead to an increase in the level of production, which would in turn ease tensions on the labour market caused by

⁵ E. von Weber, *Vier Jahre in Afrika 1871–1875*, 2 vols., Leipzig 1878; id., *Die Erweiterung des deutschen Wirtschaftsgebietes und die Grundlegung zu überseeischen deutschen Staaten: Ein dringendes Gebot unserer wirtschaftlichen Nothlage*, Leipzig 1879; on E. von Weber see Bade, *Fabri*, pp. 97–100. According to G. A. Craig, these writers 'played the same role that was played in England by Sir John Seeley and in France by Leroy-Beaulieu', *Germany 1866–1945*, Oxford 1978, p. 119; cf. W. J. Mommsen, 'Nationale und ökonomische Faktoren im britischen Imperialismus vor 1914', in *Historische Zeitschrift*, 206 (1968), pp. 618–64; W. Baumgart, *Imperialism: Idea and Reality of British and French Colonial Expansion, 1880–1914*, Oxford 1982.

⁶ K. J. Bade, 'Massenwanderung und Arbeitsmarkt im deutschen Nordosten von 1880 bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg', in *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 20 (1980), pp. 265–323; id., *Vom Auswanderungsland zum Einwanderungsland? Deutschland 1880–1980*, Berlin 1983,

pp. 17–28; id., 'Die deutsche überseeische Massenauswanderung im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert', in id. (ed.), *Auswanderer—Wanderarbeiter—Gastarbeiter: Bevölkerung, Arbeitsmarkt und Wanderung in Deutschland seit der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, 2 vols., Ostfildern 1984, vol. 1, pp. 259–99.

⁷ Wehler, *Bismarck*, pp. 112–57 and 263 ff.; cf. Bade, *Fabri*, pp. 21–4 and 67–120; id., 'Die deutsche Kolonialexpansion in Afrika: Ausgangssituation und Ergebnis', in W. Fürtz (ed.), *Afrika im Geschichtsunterricht europäischer Länder: Von der Kolonialgeschichte zur Geschichte der Dritten Welt*, Munich 1982, pp. 7–47; id., 'Das Kaiserreich als Kolonialmacht: Ideologische Projektionen und historische Erfahrung', in J. Becker and A. Hillgruber (eds.), *Die deutsche Frage im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Munich 1983, pp. 91–108; H. Gollwitzer, *Geschichte des weltpolitischen Denkens*, 2 vols., Göttingen 1972 and 1982, vol. 2, pp. 222–6.

the mismatch between supply and demand and also reduce population pressure, the most important demographic and economic push factor behind mass emigration overseas. Growing 'over-population' and especially the 'dreadful increase in the proletarian population' that might aggravate the 'social question' and precipitate revolutionary events could not, however, be absorbed by the labour market until further provision was made. For the time being, mass emigration was considered a 'social necessity'; it was seen as the 'mass export of potentially explosive revolutionary material', and German settler colonies or agricultural colonies would be established to take it. Holdings for German immigrants in Africa were one consideration. But the same argument was applied even more to German settlements in South America, where 'organized' mass immigration and 'Teutonization' were to create a semi-colonial 'New Germany in South America'—politically independent, but connected to Germany by close economic and cultural ties. By this means, the 'loss' of human capital as represented by mass emigration (about 90 per cent of which was bound for the USA, one of Germany's main competitors on the world market) would be transformed into a 'gain' for Germany—until ultimately, Germany's own expanding labour markets would render emigration unnecessary. Internal tensions in Germany—'creeping discontent' among the 'propertyless classes' on the one hand and 'political dissensions between the parties' on the other—were to be dissolved by everyone entering on the 'new auspicious path of national development' together, and by the 'new hope' that was within the reach of everyone 'who felt genuinely deprived, and who had only been deluded' by Social Democracy. For the 'sad case' that a real danger of revolution remained, however, penal colonies were planned for socialist agitators and 'anarchists'.⁸

The main political, economic, commercial, demographic, and 'social' arguments used by propagandists of expansionism and colonialism were located in an area bounded on three sides by nationalism, economic imperialism, and social imperialism. Within this 'triangle' the most varied ideological networks existed, ranging from social Darwinist and racist conceptual models to ideologies of a 'civilizing' cultural 'mission'. In many respects, these notions were less the expression of 'objective' socio-economic needs representing real political constraints than the result of a vision, fed by ideas of great power status at a time of social and economic crisis, and apparently vindicated by the competing overseas interests of other nations. This vision was kept alive by the fact that notions of what was feasible were so vague that success seemed possible, while failure would at least not be immediately obvious. For this reason, however, the vision was no more than a fleeting mental construct that could exercise its seductive power only as long as no German colonies actually existed. Once they were there, it would be necessary to measure the dream of a colonial empire against colonial reality.

From the outset the international 'scramble for Africa' that began in the early 1880s provided German colonial propagandists with an additional motive: competition. They were influenced in this by a mixture of Anglophilia and Anglophobia, by the fact that Britain was perceived as a model, by feelings of inferiority, and by defiant thoughts of rivalry. The feeling that this was Germany's last chance 'to make up for the omissions of centuries', and the fear of being 'too late' again in this supposedly final struggle for

⁸ Bade, *Fabri*, pp. 85-94 and 97-9; cf. n. 7 above.

power on the world-historical stage, gave an increasingly strident tone to demands for German colonial expansion.⁹

In the early 1880s German colonialist propaganda, which in many respects was indebted to the classics of English colonialist theory, cohered into a programme that was adopted by the organized colonial movement.¹⁰ Early on, even fact-finding trips were made to Britain. The state of the recent British colonial movement and the publicity methods it employed were investigated by, among other things, looking at the Royal Colonial Institute, founded as early as 1868, the year in which Dilke's *Greater Britain* was published.¹¹

The most important associations within the organized German colonial movement were initially the regional *Westdeutsche Verein für Colonisation und Export* (WV), founded in 1881 by Fabri in Düsseldorf, and the supra-regional *Deutsche Kolonialverein* (KV) under Prince Hohenlohe-Langenburg, founded in 1882 in Frankfurt-on-Main, with which the WV amalgamated; together they represented the colonial movement's more moderate wing. Its aim was twofold: first, to turn public opinion in favour of colonialism by large-scale public opinion in favour of colonialism by large-scale publicity campaigns, that is, 'to whip up the nation's will in this direction', and secondly to win over leading businessmen by selectively advertising for investors, and to encourage them to undertake 'private initiatives' overseas.¹² In both areas, the ground was to be prepared for later colonial expansion. Above all, however, the pressure of 'public opinion' and business interests was intended to gain Bismarck's support; in respect of foreign trade, the Chancellor was very much a free trader, and after the Samoa Bill had been defeated in the Reichstag in 1880, his scepticism of overseas plans with any 'colonial' implications at all had only grown. Apart from the WV and the KV, the colonial movement also included the smaller, radical wing of 'practical men' around K. Peters and his *Gesellschaft für deutsche Kolonisation* (GfdK) in Berlin. Since 1884 the two umbrella organizations, the GfdK and the KV, had been in competition with each other. In opposition to the scorned Frankfurt 'theorists', the GfdK pursued its own overseas project led, after 1885, by its own organization, the *Deutsch-Ostafrikanische Gesellschaft* (DOAG). Not until the end of 1887—more than three years after Germany's first colonial claims in South West Africa—did the GfdK combine with the KV to form a supra-regional holding company, the *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft* (DKG).

The first German *Schutzerklärung* in Africa was made by telegraph on 24 April 1884, when Bismarck declared the coastal strip that A. Lüderitz had acquired on Angra Pequena Bay in South West Africa a 'protected' area. The last one was made on 27

⁹ K. Peters, 'Gründungsaufwurf der Gesellschaft für deutsche Kolonisation vom 28. 3. 1884', in E. G. Jacob, *Deutsche Kolonialpolitik in Dokumenten*, Leipzig 1938, pp. 83–7.

¹⁰ On the history of the early German colonial movement, see K. Klauß, 'Die Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft und die deutsche Kolonialpolitik von den Anfängen bis 1895', Ph. D. thesis, Berlin 1966, R. V. Pierard, 'The German Colonial Society, 1882–1914' Ph. D. thesis, Iowa State University 1964; Wehler, *Bismarck*, pp. 158–68; Bade, *Fabri*, pp. 136–85 and 287–309; W. D. Smith, 'The Ideology of German Colonialism,

1840–1906', in *Journal of Modern History*, 46 (1974), pp. 641–62; id., *The German Colonial Empire*, Chapel Hill 1978, pp. 20 ff.; E. Bendikat, *Organisierte Kolonialbewegung in der Bismarck-Ära*, Heidelberg 1984; H. Gründer, *Geschichte der deutschen Kolonien*, Paderborn 1985, pp. 26–50.

¹¹ Bade, *Fabri*, pp. 159 f.; cf. Baumgart, *Imperialism*, pp. 75 ff. and 165 ff.

¹² Fabri, *Colonien*, pp. 30 and 54 f.; *Kolonialpolitische Correspondenz des westdeutschen Vereins für Colonisation und Export*, Jan. 1883, no. 2, p. 2; cf. Bade, *Fabri*, pp. 155 ff.

February 1885, one day after the Berlin West Africa Conference, when a *Schutzbrief* (royal charter) was issued for the GfdK's East African possessions. The *Schutzerklärung* of spring 1884 surprised even the leaders of the German colonial movement. Although it had been campaigning vociferously for years, the movement was still only in its formative phase, and was involved in debilitating internal struggles about what direction it should take. 'If and when Germany will gain its own colonial possessions in the political sense of the word, only the future will tell', Fabri had declared in March 1883 before the General Assembly of the WV, in view of the growing and naïve colonial enthusiasm on display. He continued: 'What we now often refer to as "solving the German colonial question" is a task that may be reserved for our sons in the twentieth century.'¹³

The spring of 1884, an election year, proved to be eventful. On 28 March the GfdK was established in Berlin. Its founders clearly intended to devote themselves 'only to practical colonization'—unlike the 'theoretical' Frankfurt group—and to 'proceed to actual deeds as soon as possible'. On 30 April 1884 its rival, the KV in Frankfurt, responded by founding a section in Berlin. By the end of April Fabri knew 'that soon the German Flag in overseas territories will be flying not only on shipboard, as has been the case hitherto, but also from the ramparts'. Nevertheless, he attempted to destroy all colonial illusions built upon a mere enthusiasm for annexations. He remained convinced that the 'preparatory work' of the next few years would 'come to fruition only in the twentieth century'. On 30 April 1884, almost a week after Bismarck's telegraphic declaration of protection for Lüderitz, Fabri, with a passing shot at the propagandist K. Peters, repeated his point at the constituent assembly of the Berlin section of the KV: 'Practical colonial policy will be a matter for the twentieth century; the nineteenth century's duty is to allow the colonial idea to come to life in Germany.'¹⁴

When it was reported in the press that Berlin and London were negotiating about a *Schutzerklärung* for Lüderitz, and the first German flagpoles were actually erected on the soil of Cameroon and Togo in July 1884, it became obvious that colonial propaganda and theory had been overtaken by colonial practice. Fabri's prediction that a 'real solution' to the 'German colonial question'—that is, effective colonial rule, administrations, and economics—would not be found until the twentieth century was correct. But, in his opinion and that of other 'theorists' of the German colonial movement, the preconditions for that 'solution' were created precipitately in the scramble for Africa—which the colonial movements of the competing nations had helped to initiate. The German colonial movement contributed to Bismarck's involvement overseas less by offering advice or perhaps exerting indirect pressure—as it believed itself—than by providing popular backing in the form of plebiscitary legitimation. In the *Kolonialrausch* (colonial fever) of the middle of the decade, it was in fact manipulated as a tool in the hands of Bismarck.¹⁵

In the fever induced by the *aurora colonialis*,¹⁶ two facts were at first obscured: first, that leading business circles, who were essential to the building up of a German colonial economy, had a very different attitude towards 'colonial' expansion than did

¹³ *Kolonialpolitische Correspondenz*, Jan. 1883, no. 3, p. 4.

¹⁴ J. Wagner, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, Berlin 1888, 2nd edn., 1st edn. 1886, p. 1; *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung*, January 1884, pp. 191 and 193; C. Grunert, *10 Jahre deutscher Kolonialbestrebungen in der Abteilung Berlin der Deutschen Kolonialgesellschaft, 1884-1894*, Berlin 1894, p. 10;

B. Kurtze, *Die Deutsch-Ostafrikanische Gesellschaft*, Jena 1913, p. 2.

¹⁵ On this see Wehler, *Bismarck*, pp. 474-86.

¹⁶ M. Buchner, *Aurora Colonialis: Bruchstücke eines Tagebuchs aus dem ersten Beginn unserer Kolonialpolitik, 1884-1885*, Munich 1914.

the predominantly middle-class advocates of colonialism; and secondly that the free-trader Bismarck had not been miraculously converted overnight to support a state policy of colonialism in 1884-5. Thus Germany's 'colonial episode'¹⁷—which in any event was to last only thirty years—opened with several grave misunderstandings. Together with the unexpected momentum developed by the *situation coloniale* itself,¹⁸ they set off a series of chain reactions that quickly and lastingly destroyed the dreams of an early *aurora colonialis*.

This was true of the colonial movement. It soon saw its early colonial 'phantasmagorias'¹⁹ shattered by the harsh realities of colonial history. In the late 1880s, at the time of the first major crisis of German colonial rule in South West and East Africa, the colonial movement came into sharp conflict with Bismarck, because in his 'indifference to the concerns of colonial policy',²⁰ he no longer seemed to be offering clear leadership.

It also applied to the business circles that had been courted by the colonial movement prior to the *Schutzerklärungen* and thereafter by Bismarck himself. In so far as their interest in overseas expansion was not merely due to general patriotism, but also had a commercial dimension, they remained sceptical about the colonial movement's ambitions. They felt overburdened both by Bismarck's appeal for economic involvement overseas under uncertain conditions, and by his conceptions of a German-African business regime modelled on the British chartered companies.

It also applied, finally, to Bismarck himself. He saw *Schutzerklärungen* as limited, and politically calculable, concessions to overseas economic interests. They were received with grateful approval in those business circles that had an interest in *Schutz* (protection) of this sort. But *Schutzerklärungen* did not produce the desired vigorous economic involvement overseas; and there was certainly no evidence of a willingness to undertake expensive, and in some respects, risky ventures in self-government under the charter system. Added to this was that 'colonial policy', which Bismarck did not want to see develop an independent political profile, soon gained so much exposure in the protectorates as a political topic in the Reichstag and in public that Bismarck, who was 'not originally a colonialist' and had 'approached these colonial matters only hesitantly and with reluctance', soon made no secret of the fact that 'he had become pretty tired of colonial matters'.²¹ All this was on the horizon in 1884-5, while German colonial history was beginning in Africa and the West Africa Conference, at which Germany made its international debut as a colonial power, was being prepared and held in Berlin.

2. BUSINESS INTERESTS AND COLONIAL EXPANSION

The colonial movement of the early 1880s tried to enlist the support of businessmen from three main areas, in so far as they had existing or potential overseas interests

¹⁷ F. Fabri, *Wie weiter? Kirchenpolitische Betrachtungen zum Ende des Kulturkampfes*, Gotha 1887, p. iv.

¹⁸ G. Balandier, 'La situation coloniale: Approche théorique', in *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie* (1952), German translation in R. v. Albertini (ed.), *Moderne Kolonialgeschichte*, Cologne 1970, pp. 105-24.

¹⁹ A. Bastian, *Die Colonie der Tagesdebatte und coloniale*

Vereinigungen: Einige Fragestellungen, Berlin 1884, p. 7; Wehler, *Bismarck*, p. 407.

²⁰ F. Fabri, *Der deutsch-englische Vertrag*, Cologne 1890, pp. 9 and 19.

²¹ Id., *Fünf Jahre deutscher Kolonialpolitik: Rück- und Ausblicke*, Gotha 1889, p. iv; M. v. Hagen, *Bismarcks Kolonialpolitik*, Stuttgart 1923, p. 237.

which extended beyond the general patriotism of the day and thus made them seem susceptible to the arguments of the colonial movement: (1) export, import, and industrial capital from the inland as opposed to the seaboard towns; (2) Hanseatic overseas trade; and (3) banking capital involved in the international money and investment markets. These groups had different spheres of interest, and thus assessed the profitability of colonial business ventures differently, but all were clearly inclined to let the other groups lead the way. Added to this was the feeling, common to all, that without political guarantees of security from Berlin, no adequate basis existed for business; none of them showed any willingness to go beyond their own concrete business interests and get involved in colonial administration. A few examples, with emphasis on Hanseatic overseas trade, especially that from Hamburg, will serve to illustrate this.

2.1 *Export, import, and industrial inland capital*

Domestic manufacturers already indirectly involved in the Africa trade were concerned only with straightforward business interests; they did not participate in the debate on liberalism or protectionism in foreign trade, and therefore their attitude towards the 'colonial question' remained ambivalent. Their interests were pragmatic: they wanted to further stabilize and increase their recently augmented exports to West Africa and the Congo (mainly firearms, gunpowder, spirits, and cotton products), as well as their imports (mainly rubber, gutta-percha, caoutchouc, wax, ivory, and peanuts for the production of edible oils). Most of this trade was carried by steamers of the Woermann Line in Hamburg. They made monthly deliveries to German trading stations in West Africa as well as to those of other countries in the Congo, where at that time there were no large German trading establishments. Almost two dozen German chambers of commerce, led by that of the district of Solingen, immediately protested in Berlin against the Sierra Leone agreement concluded by Britain and Portugal on 26 February 1884. This, however, was less an expression of German colonial ambitions than a vote against Portuguese ambitions backed by Britain and in favour of free trade in the Congo.²²

Medium-sized manufacturers, who were dependent on or interested in exports, were more easily approachable, but also extremely reluctant to get involved themselves. They were relatively strongly represented in the colonial movement as a whole, especially in the WV. While they had no business connections with Africa, the difficulty of finding foreign markets made them seem willing to support almost any strategy that had reasonable prospects of success. However, they imposed stringent conditions: the proposals must not require risky, large investments at the outset; overseas trade, on its own initiative, must open the necessary distribution channels; banking capital must help finance exports and especially any further investment that would become necessary; and finally, Berlin must provide political guarantees of security. Colonial propaganda in these circles achieved some results: appeals were readily signed, functions were attended, and manufacturers joined associations in the

²² *Aktenstücke betr. die Kongo-Frage. Dem Bundesrath und dem Reichstag vorgelegt im April 1885, Stenographische Berichte über die Verhandlungen des Reichstags (Sten. Ber.) 1884/5,*

vol. 7, Berlin 1885, pp. 1641-70, here pp. 1649 f.; cf. Wehler, *Bismarck*, p. 377.

colonial movement. But it rarely produced the sort of 'private initiative' overseas that the colonial movement tried to encourage.²³

The Düsseldorf industrialist, F. A. Hasenclever, who also had commercial interests in South America, was one of the few exceptions. He was advised by Fabri, who had knowledge of ore deposits in South West Africa through reports sent by his mission society, which had been active in the area since the 1840s. Fabri developed a scheme that combined mining, trade, land speculation, and railway construction. Early in the 1880s he persuaded Hasenclever to 'finance a well-funded mining company' in the hinterland of British Walvis Bay, to be called *Deutsche Bergbau-Gesellschaft an der Walfisch Bai*, or *Deutsche Südwestafrikanische Gesellschaft*. In line with Bismarck's later ideas concerning charters, this company was to assume jurisdiction over its territory, taking responsibility ranging from 'policing and law' to 'military organization' of a sort.²⁴ But even Hasenclever needed the co-operation of a big bank to implement his plans, and A. von Hanseemann's Berlin *Disconto-Gesellschaft* was interested in the venture. This scheme was much more thoroughly prepared than A. Lüderitz's simple acquisition of land on Angra Pequena Bay: detailed reports were received from experts on the spot, and mining rights were acquired in Hereroland. Nevertheless, it had no chance of success. Before the *Disconto-Gesellschaft* could get involved, it needed political guarantees of security from Berlin, which Bismarck was not prepared to give: a German protectorate in the hinterland of Walfish Bay could have been interpreted as a challenge directed specifically at the rather weak British position established at Walfish Bay in 1877 at the insistence of the Cape Colony. These plans could not be followed up until after the *Schutzerklärung* was made in favour of Lüderitz in April 1884. On 17 July 1884 a disappointed Hasenclever sold his rights in Hereroland to a consortium led by Hanseemann's *Disconto-Gesellschaft*, Bismarck's banker Bleichröder, and Dyes, a prominent merchant from Hamburg. The German flag was raised on their territory in the hinterland of Walfish Bay on 20 August 1884.²⁵ But more than ten years were to pass before the area was opened up commercially.

2.2 Hanseatic West Africa trade and colonial expansion

For the colonial movement, the maritime cities and especially the traditional rivals Hamburg and Bremen were 'strongholds which had to be conquered; once they were gained, the rest would be easy'.²⁶ Until the early 1880s, however, the Hanseatic Africa traders remained pragmatic advocates of free trade expansion. They opposed any state regulation of foreign trade beyond the protection afforded in the overseas territories of other countries by the establishment of more German consulates, and in overseas territories without a 'ruler' by occasional visits from a gunboat. Where there were no borders, there could be no controls on imports and exports and, above all, no unfair advantages or disadvantages as a result of hated differential duties. This attitude had

²³ Bade, *Fabri*, pp. 166-9 and 208-16.

²⁴ Fabri to Bismarck, 17 May 1884, Zentrales Staatsarchiv (ZStA) Potsdam, Reichskolonialamt (RKA) 1996, pp. 26 f.; id., 'Deutsche Unternehmungen in Südwestafrika', *Kölnische Zeitung*, 9-12 September 1883.

²⁵ J. H. Esterhuysen, *South West Africa, 1880-1894: The*

Establishment of German Authority in South West Africa, Cape Town 1968, pp. 6-28; Wehler, *Bismarck*, pp. 268 and 282 f.; Bade, *Fabri*, pp. 200-8; D. M. Schreuder, *The Scramble for Southern Africa, 1877-1895: The Politics of Partition Reappraised*, Cambridge, Mass. 1980, pp. 115-36.

²⁶ *Colonialpolitische Correspondenz*, Feb. 1883, no. 6, p. 1.

something to do with the fact that many Africa traders made extremely high profits from the trade in firearms, gunpowder, and spirits distilled from potatoes in East Elbia.²⁷ But even more, it was a general expression of the long tradition of free trade that had so far served Hanseatic traders well, also in their dealings with the colonies of other nations.²⁸

Their attitude was not fundamentally affected, at least initially, by the establishment of German protectorates in 1884-5. This is illustrated by a speech made by the President of the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce, A. Woermann, at the German *Handelstag* (annual meeting of traders) in January 1885, when he supported the 'principle of allowing all nations equal access' to German protectorates.²⁹ This too had pragmatic reasons: Germany as a colonial power was always the smaller partner, especially compared with Britain. Erecting trade barriers against other colonial powers in German colonies might therefore have resulted in German trade suffering much more severely in the colonies of other nations. Requests for protection that had previously been made from time to time were defensive and not, strictly speaking, designed to influence colonial policy. Their aim was to gain protection for the existing, but threatened, interests of specific companies; they did not represent a gradual preparation for territorial expansion to benefit any potential 'German' interests.

When emissaries of a vociferous but small early German colonial movement tried to enlist the support of various Hanseatic overseas traders, therefore, the 'landlubbers' crazy colonial ideas' were pointedly greeted with reserve as late as 1882. The distance at which the Hanseatic traders kept the colonial movement, interpreted as a slight, gave rise to a complaint by the WV's newspaper early in 1883 'that our Hanseatic towns in particular have so far not merely behaved passively towards the colonial movement that has arisen among us, but have positively rejected it'. In July 1883 the newspaper followed this up with a provocative article that sharply criticized Hanseatic particularism as 'un-German egoism', accused the Hanseatic towns of 'anti-national reserve', and went so far as to extol the customs union with Hamburg as 'Bismarck's first, albeit unwitting, colonial act'. The concerns of domestic exporters hardly got a hearing in the Hanseatic towns, the article continued, because Hanseatic merchants had no interest in domestic economic and social problems, but only in their own business affairs. The article therefore appealed to the press that was favourable to colonial interests to teach the Hanseatic towns 'to think in a somewhat more national, more universally German manner'.³⁰

By the time this article was published, attitudes in Hamburg had already become much more differentiated, although the colonial movement vastly overestimated the significance of this change. As early as July 1883 the WV's newspaper was able to print a statement by a 'highly respected' Hamburg resident.³¹ The anonymous author, a

²⁷ The Hamburg protest against the Sierra Leone agreement was accompanied by statistics on the value of 'goods exported to the Congo between January 1883 and March 1884' by the Hamburg Woermann shipping line. They comprised only three main headings: 'Gunpowder' to the value of 300,000 marks, 'Spirits' to the value of 300,000 marks and 'Miscellaneous' (main item: firearms) to the value of 250,000 marks (*Aktenstücke Kongofrage*, p. 1649); cf. Bade, *Fabri*, pp. 272-9.

²⁸ On this and the following see H. Washausen,

Hamburg und die Kolonialpolitik des deutschen Reiches 1880 bis 1890, Hamburg 1968, pp. 22-5, 34-42, 67-83, and 115-21.

²⁹ *Verhandlungen des 13. deutschen Handelstages in Berlin am 27. 1. 1885*, Berlin 1885 (*Verhandlungen Handelstag 1885*), p. 6.

³⁰ *Kolonialpolitische Correspondenz*, Jan. 1883, no. 3, p. 4; no. 6, p. 1.

³¹ *Kolonialpolitische Correspondenz*, Jan. 1883, nos. 7/8, pp. 4-6.

'Hamburg merchant', was almost certainly the president of the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce, A. Woermann, director of C. Woermann, the most important Hamburg company trading in West Africa, and later to become the largest private shipowner in the world. Bismarck called him a 'königlicher Kauffmann' (royal merchant); others saw in him a 'kaufmännischer Bismarck' (commercial Bismarck), while in West Africa he was known simply as 'king of Hamburg'.³²

Woermann felt called upon to correct 'misconceptions about the ideas that are thought to be current in the Hanseatic towns concerning the colonial question'. He emphasized that his own ideas were 'shared by a large number of distinguished local merchants', and announced:

Wenn die deutsche Regierung, sei es durch Vertrag oder auf andere Weise einen überseeischen Landstrich tatsächlich erwerben sollte, so würde eine solche Tatsache in sehr vielen hiesigen Kaufmannskreisen mit Freuden begrüßt werden. Solange aber die deutsche Reichsregierung, ohne deren Mitwirkung eine deutsche Kolonie unmöglich erscheint, sich so ablehnend verhält wie bisher, wird man sich hier nicht theoretisch für die Erwerbung von Kolonien erwärmen können.

Domestic colonial propaganda, he continued, had not yet produced any 'real results'; all it had done was to attract the attention of rival nations and encourage haste. This was an indirect allusion to developments in Cameroon that directly affected Woermann himself: fear of British import duties was the real motive behind his interest in the political protection afforded by 'colonial' expansion in West Africa. A proposal to set up a trading colony in West Africa that had been made to the German foreign ministry in March 1883 and supported by a memorandum from the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce on 6 July 1883 was given added weight by Woermann's sensational statement that 'acquisitions such as these would certainly give German trade in countries across the Atlantic a firmer hold and more secure support; without political protection, trade today cannot really flourish or make any headway'.³³

Woermann and other prominent merchants had their own West African business interests to promote in the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce as well as in the German foreign ministry; Woermann had only recently, and with some difficulty, succeeded in gaining the Chamber of Commerce's support for these interests. He therefore had every reason not to put his name to such an unequivocal statement in a colonial propaganda sheet, and to refer cautiously only to 'a large number of Hanseatic merchants', or to 'many local business circles'. But attitudes in the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce were already beginning to change, a process instigated mainly by the West Africa merchants and above all by Woermann himself. This change was fully apparent by 1884. There were four main reasons—of varying importance—why the traditional free trade position of the Hanseatic merchants gradually became receptive to protectionist ideas that were certainly still in the vanguard of 'colonial' ambitions.³⁴ None of these reasons related to Germany; they all concerned real or feared changes in the concrete conditions governing trade in West Africa and the Congo.

³² Hagen, *Bismarcks Kolonialpolitik*, p. 337; Bucher, *Aurora Colonialis*, p. 75; T. Bohner, *Der deutsche Kaufmann über See: Hundert Jahre deutscher Handel in der Welt*, Berlin 1939, p. 474.

³³ See n. 31 above.

³⁴ On this and the following see Washausen, *Hamburg*, pp. 138–54; cf. E. Böhm, *Überseehandel und Flottenbau: Hanseatische Kaufmannschaft und deutsche Seerüstung, 1879–1902*, Düsseldorf 1972, pp. 31 f.

1. For long, complaints had been made about the hindrances and disruptions to trade caused by various factors on the African side: unrest in the trading areas and attacks on trading stations, unreliable African treaty partners, and the unpopular monopoly on transit trade exercised by the Duala in Cameroon, which blocked trade with the interior and was only broken by force when Cameroon became a German colony. These complaints alone, some of which were decades old, would not have made the Hamburg traders change their position.

2. The situation was exacerbated by the fact that several Hanseatic business houses—including, in West Africa, W. Jantzen & J. Thormählen, C. Goedelt and G. L. Gaiser, as well as Woermann—had started, as ‘private colonizers’, to lay out experimental plantations to supply raw materials for import. Growing investments were thus tied up in West Africa. While agreements resembling treaties had been concluded with African leaders with regard to these plantations as well as permanent trading stations, there were no political guarantees of security to ensure that they were kept.

3. The alarming advance of competing European interests in the race for Africa, as yet barely started, but in full swing by the time of the Berlin West Africa Conference, seemed even more dangerous against this background. Stanley and Brazza were pushing into the Congo; Portugal was staking claims north of the mouth of the Congo River; Fernando Po and Eloby were active on Spain’s account; and Britain was attempting to annex Cameroon.

4. The final straw was provided by the Sierra Leone agreement of 26 February 1884, which was part of the run-up to the West Africa Conference. It provoked protest resolutions in which the interests of the Hanseatic overseas traders finally merged with those of domestic producers dependent on imports or exports. As early as 20 March 1884 twenty-four West Africa business houses in Hamburg ‘with trade connections in the Congo’ filed a hurriedly put-together protest, supported by statistics supplied by Woermann. This protest was printed in the *Weißbuch* (official government publication on foreign policy), as was the protest made in Bremen on 12 April 1884. The domestic chambers of commerce made their protest, to which we have already referred, between these two dates.³⁵

By appealing to these import-export interests common to the Hanseatic traders and domestic manufacturers alike, Woermann, in a position paper on ‘German colonial policy’, tried to persuade the German *Handelstag* to pronounce favourably on Bismarck’s ‘colonial policy’.³⁶ Only eighteen months earlier, a proposal made by several chambers of commerce (including Hamburg) to place ‘the issue of colonial policy’ on the agenda had been rejected by the standing committee of the *Handelstag* as ‘not relevant’. But things had changed now that ‘German colonial policy had become a *fait accompli*’ in South West Africa (Angra Pequena) and in West Africa (Cameroon, Togo). Delegates at the thirteenth German *Handelstag* in Berlin on 21 January 1885 unanimously accepted Woermann’s address to Bismarck, which referred to the new trading colonies in West Africa and was based largely on arguments relating to commercial policy:

Der deutsche Handelstag begrüßt freudig, daß die Reichsregierung einen Anfang mit einer praktischen Kolonialpolitik gemacht hat, da durch dieselbe der deutschen Industrie neue

³⁵ *Aktenstücke Kongofrage*, pp. 1647–52.

³⁶ *Verhandlungen Handelstag 1885*, pp. 2–8.

Absatzgebiete erschlossen, dem deutschen Handel kräftiger Schutz und Förderung gewährt wird und für die Schifffahrt vermehrter Verkehr geschaffen wird.³⁷

With a passing shot at the colonial movement's enthusiasm, and at the domestic manufacturers' dreams of new markets, Woermann explained that after a situation in which for many years 'everything that promised to multiply and expand these markets had, in Germany, been regarded as something good and national', it was now no longer enough 'merely to indulge in simple enthusiasm and national raptures'. This was especially so as 'the national feeling would suffer the worst possible blow if hopes were to be disappointed . . . and if inappropriate hopes were to be built on this national enthusiasm'. It was not enough 'simply to hoist the flag', because in commercial terms, only the 'seed . . . for future developments' had as yet been sown; 'whether these colonies will develop as we would wish them to will depend on whether the enthusiasm that exists today is translated into action.'

The commercial 'action' that Woermann was calling for had two sides. The African side had two aspects: the indigenous population had 'gradually to be accustomed to feeling needs'; and it was also a matter of 'raising these colonies as such to a level at which they can really produce', so that 'the commodities we need that are specific to the tropics, like coffee, cocoa, palm oil etc., can be produced in our own colonies'. On the German side, on the other hand, success in stepping up export trade to the colonies and building up colonial import production would depend not only on 'whether traders in fact . . . get involved in these colonies to a large degree', but also on whether 'more circles than hitherto consider buying things in these colonies, and making something out of these colonies by investing capital and labour in them'. This was addressed mainly to banking capital.³⁸

Woermann's appeal for greater involvement by trading and banking capital in those areas under the Reich's 'protection' was in line commercially with Bismarck's own expectations; so much so, that we can assume the basic outlines of this initiative had been cleared with him. This seems the more likely as Woermann was an adviser to Bismarck on questions of overseas trade at this time and, on Bismarck's orders, also took part in negotiations at the West Africa Conference running concurrently in Berlin.³⁹ But as far as the administration of the *Schutzgebiete* was concerned, Woermann's speech to the *Handelstag* showed that Bismarck's idea of a German-West African *Schutzbriefsystem* (system of chartered companies) on the British model had no chance from the outset with the German West Africa traders. Only on the Chancellor's insistence did they form the *Syndikat für Westafrika*;⁴⁰ and they persistently refused to assume territorial sovereignty.

In his speech to the *Handelstag*, Woermann described in detail various 'types of colonization' that were also being discussed at the West Africa Conference. One of them was the royal charter system that Britain had used successfully in the past (East India Company), and was indeed still using at present (North Borneo Company). Undoubtedly, said Woermann, Germany would soon be employing something similar:

In diesem Falle haben die Gesellschaften als solche das Recht, die ganze Gewalt auszuüben, sie haben das Recht, wenn sie andere Kaufleute zulassen wollen, von diesen Eingangszölle zu

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 2 and 8.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 2, 4, and 7.

³⁹ Wehler, *Bismarck*, p. 387.

⁴⁰ Washausen, *Hamburg*, pp. 121-7.

erheben, sie haben aber auch das Recht, andere Leute auszuschließen . . . Diese Art der Kolonisation bietet ja für das Land den großen Vorteil, daß von seiten des Mutterlandes keine eigenen Verwaltungskosten erstattet zu werden brauchen, weil sämtliche Beamte von der Gesellschaft angestellt werden. Das Mutterland hat vielleicht nichts weiter zu tun, als einen einzigen Beamten anzustellen, der die Jurisdiktion ausübt.⁴¹

This amounted to Bismarck's charter concept, widely misunderstood as a 'colonial programme'.⁴²

In addition to giving a general description of protectorates, however, Woermann casually but firmly rejected Bismarck's ideas for West Africa. His assessment of the situation soon proved to be self-fulfilling. On the one hand, Woermann pointed out, even a chartered company represented a considerable risk for the colonial country, 'because a company can easily enter into extremely far-reaching commitments, over which the home government has no control, but for which it is later liable', as events in German East Africa soon proved. On the other hand, this system was only feasible 'in those countries where there has so far been no European trade—New Guinea, for example, and Angra Pequena', but not in areas 'where a large number of foreign firms already exist'—like West Africa, for example.⁴³ And anyway, any 'type of colonization' would ultimately 'always culminate in the country that exercises the protectorate taking possession of the other country', whether directly or indirectly via 'seizure of the land acquired and run by a company'. Among the types of colonization he discussed, Woermann's choice for Germany was clearly for 'countries which could be administered directly from Germany'—which would involve no administrative costs or political risks for trade and commercial interests.⁴⁴ But for various reasons, Bismarck strongly opposed direct colonial administration of this sort, which would compel the Reich to accept financial and political responsibility for the colonies.⁴⁵

The tension between Bismarck's steadfast resistance to direct colonial administration of all German protectorates in Africa, and the German overseas merchants' equally steadfast lack of interest in accepting territorial sovereignty under the charter system—with the exception of German East Africa—resulted in a lasting instability and lack of direction in Germany's African empire in the 1880s that became apparent in the crisis in German South West Africa and German East Africa at the end of 1888. This, of course, had an impact on the confidence of investors—especially banks—that Bismarck was vainly trying to encourage to invest in the colonies.

2.3 *Banking capital and colonial expansion*

The colonial movement saw large investments by banking capital both as a necessary support for the 'private initiatives' undertaken by trading capital in the forefront of colonial expansion and as a prerequisite for any systematic construction and development

⁴¹ *Verhandlungen Handelstag 1885*, p. 6.

⁴² See n. 57 below.

⁴³ 'Es würde z.B. ganz unerhört sein, wenn . . . in Kamerun eine deutsche Firma, welche dort etabliert ist, welche seit Jahren mit einer großen Anzahl englischer Firmen konkurriert hat, das Land und Oberhoheit erwerben und dann zur Deckung der Verwaltungskosten von ihren englischen Konkurrenten Zölle erheben würde

. . . Darum ist es notwendig, daß in solchen Gebieten, wie auch von der Reichsregierung vorgeschlagen ist, ein Gouverneur angestellt wird, und daß von diesem Gouverneur im Namen des Reiches die Zölle erhoben werden und die Verwaltung ausgeübt wird' (*Verhandlungen Handelstag 1885*, p. 6).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ See section 3.

of a colonial economy beyond pure colonial trade. As late as 1885 Fabri warned that unless financiers and capitalists displayed a readiness to invest, 'our attempts in the area of colonial policy will remain only wishful thinking without any real achievements'.⁴⁶ But attempts to interest banking circles in colonial investment—after the *Schutzserklärungen* Bismarck himself took part in them, mainly through the agency of his banker, G. von Bleichröder—had little success, apart from exceptions like A. von Hansemann's *Disconto-Gesellschaft* with its South Sea interests in Samoa and New Guinea.⁴⁷ Several reasons, of varying importance, can be found for this.

Large investors in Imperial Germany, unlike those in Britain, had practically no experience in colonial business. In addition, they were prepared to invest only limited capital, again in contrast to British investors. Before the First World War German investors had very clearly Eurocentric interests: as late as 1913–14, 53 per cent of German investments were in Europe, while for Britain, the figure was only 5 per cent. Added to this was the fact that for long after the beginning of German colonialism in 1884–5 the performance of large investments tied up in the colonies could not match that of the investments that gave German banks—including Bismarck's banker Bleichröder—their secure profits: government loans or debt management in, for example, Turkey, Egypt, or Mexico.⁴⁸

There was an additional reason for the sceptical reserve displayed by banking capital towards large-scale investment in the African protectorates. When German colonial expansion began in 1884–5, it was not then clear exactly what position this *Kolonialpolitik* (colonial policy) took in relation to the several models that existed: self-administration under an unstable royal charger system as in German East Africa; more or less weak forms of direct colonial rule as in West Africa (Togo and Cameroon); and an equally half-hearted mixture of the two in German South West Africa, where there was a *Schutzbriefgesellschaft* (chartered company) without territorial sovereignty and a *Reichskommissar* (commissioner) without power. As the years passed, the nature of this *Kolonialpolitik* became even less clear. As long as there were no secure prospects of profit and no adequate political guarantees of security for the risky export of capital overseas, banking capital followed trading capital only reluctantly, and invested limited amounts that were more like patriotic donations and signs of goodwill towards Bismarck than an expression of real economic interest.⁴⁹ In 1885, the KV denounced 'German capital's aversion to overseas enterprises', but in vain.⁵⁰ 'The German capitalist, as a rule, is timid, a *homo novus*, who does not yet dare to contemplate far-reaching ventures,' complained Bismarck as late as 1889. He added: 'So far, our financiers' involvement in colonial enterprises seems more like a favour to the dominant trend in public opinion and official influence than a commercial enterprise entered into freely for the sake of making profits.'⁵¹

⁴⁶ F. Fabri, 'Koloniale Aufgaben', *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung*, Feb. 1885, pp. 536–51, here pp. 539 ff. and 551.

⁴⁷ Wehler, *Bismarck*, pp. 223–5 and 391–400; P. M. Kennedy, *The Samoan Tangle: A Study in Anglo-German-American Relations, 1878–1900*, Dublin 1974, pp. 22 f. and 25 ff.; S. Firth, *New Guinea under the Germans*, Melbourne 1982, pp. 7–20.

⁴⁸ F. Stern, *Gold and Iron: Bismarck, Bleichröder and the*

Building of the German Empire, New York 1977, pp. 394–435.

⁴⁹ Bade, *Fabri*, pp. 250–7.

⁵⁰ *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung*, Feb. 1885, p. 189.

⁵¹ Memorandum of June 1889, quoted in Stern, *Gold and Iron*, p. 394; the second part of the quotation comes from the German version of Stern's book, id., *Gold und Eisen: Bismarck und sein Bankier Bleichröder*, Frankfurt 1978, p. 482 f.; cf. Bade, *Fabri*, pp. 343 f.

It was not only the colonial movement that took Britain as a model. German financiers were sometimes only convinced that opportunities for profit existed in German colonies in Africa after British capital had led the way. This 'timidity of German large-scale capital . . . which was always reluctant to take an independent lead in any overseas venture, but was mostly willing to let other nations take the lead',⁵² was illustrated in almost macabre fashion in German South West Africa. By the end of the 1880s the financially weak *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft für Südwestafrika* (DKGfSWA) had still not invested much capital in the projects that Fabri and Hasenclever had unsuccessfully tried to get off the ground early in the 1880s. 'Our South West African company is lazy, bankrupt, and unenthusiastic', wrote Herbert von Bismarck to his father from London in March 1889. At this time Bismarck was giving serious consideration to Chamberlain's suggestion of exchanging German South West Africa for Heligoland. In the autumn of 1889 the inactive and stagnating, even shrinking DKGfSWA intended to transfer two thirds of its holdings to a British company because it had still not made a decision to exploit the area itself. Only Bismarck's fear that such a transaction might have negative repercussions in the crisis that ultimately led to his resignation, precipitated by matters of colonial policy among others, prevented it from going through at the end of February 1890, shortly before his fall. Such a withdrawal would have meant giving up Germany's protectorate in South West Africa with a great loss of face.⁵³

In October 1890 Fabri suggested to Bismarck's successor, Caprivi, that the interest of a well-funded company, the *Mansfeldische Kupferschiefer bauende Gesellschaft* (MKbG), might be gained for South West Africa. Officially authorized by Caprivi, Fabri approached the MKbG, but without success. By January 1891 the 'Mansfeld option' was eliminated. British capital, however, did not need this sort of encouragement; Fabri frequently pointed it out to the Germans as a model. In October 1890 Caprivi had informed him that British interests had already applied for mining rights in South West Africa. 'If not a German company, then a British-German one is preferable to none at all', urged Fabri. It was a great pity, he said, that the Reich's financial circles were irresponsibly throwing away the best investment opportunities. 'But I do not doubt', he wrote to Caprivi, 'that as soon as the first bankers in London proceed to draw up plans for the new company, an inclination to be involved, perhaps in unsuspected ways, will stir in Berlin, Hamburg and Frankfurt too.'⁵⁴ And indeed, interest was immediately aroused.

In August 1892 the South-West-Africa Company Ltd. began working in the area, with financial resources that humiliated the DKGfSWA: in 1901 its capital amounted to 20 million marks. Although it took up German capital, the South-West-Africa Company was predominantly a British company, based in London. In 1895 South African Territories Ltd., also a London company, followed suit; in 1901 it had invested 10 million marks in the country. The British initiative broke the spell that had restrained German investors. After 1893 German enterprises followed the route to Africa in quick succession, their objectives only now attuned to that combination and concentration of commercial interests that Fabri had repeatedly called for, and for

⁵² See n. 50 above.

⁵⁴ Fabri to Caprivi, 1 Feb. 1891, ZStA Potsdam,

⁵³ Wehler, *Bismarck*, p. 290 f.; cf. Craig, *Germany*, RKA 6925, pp. 76-8.
p. 121; Stern, *Gold and Iron*, p. 413.

whose sake he had urgently, but unsuccessfully, encouraged Lüderitz to merge or at least co-operate with Hasenclever in 1883: mining, trade, land speculation, and railway construction.⁵⁵

German financiers, inexperienced in colonial business ventures, displayed expectations that were almost absurd in the context of pioneering overseas investment: their hopes for a quick profit were combined with an almost panicky fear of taking risks. Thus they ensured the fulfilment of Fabri's prophecy that German colonial policy in South West Africa would not be an economic venture until the twentieth century. After the short *Kolonialtausch* of 1884-5, however, the colonial movement, economic interests, and colonial policy seemed largely to be going over the same ground without any development. Hence by 1886 Bismarck's short-lived interest in issues of German overseas expansion had given way to disappointment, scepticism, and, finally, a very obvious lack of interest.

3. BISMARCK'S CONCEPT OF 'COLONIAL POLICY'

'Solving the riddle' of Bismarck's supposed 'change of course' towards 'colonial policy', which has become the object of much research,⁵⁶ was an occupation that had already begun in Bismarck's time. It was a topic of contemporary discussion even among the colonial propagandists who had been advocating German colonial expansion since the end of the 1870s, but were taken by surprise by the event in 1884-5. In order to understand Bismarck's alleged 'change of course' and his concept of what was misunderstood as a secretly prepared, long-term 'colonial policy' that was implemented at a favourable international moment, we will have to take into account three major and interrelated policy areas which on the one hand motivated—or made possible—Bismarck's change of attitude towards 'colonial policy', and on the other, circumscribed its scope: (1) foreign trade policy, (2) foreign policy, and (3) domestic and parliamentary policy.

3.1 Foreign trade policy

Under the impact of the change from economic liberalism to protectionism, promoting foreign trade was important enough in Bismarck's thinking to justify state intervention, but it did not justify the state taking a pioneering part in establishing 'German economic interests' in overseas areas where such interests existed only in a rudimentary form, or not at all. Bismarck remained as much of a free trader as possible, while being as protectionist as necessary. This also applies to his seemingly contradictory, but in fact consistent, attitude towards a 'colonial policy' that was

⁵⁵ R. Fitzner, *Deutsches Kolonial-Handbuch*, 2 vols., Berlin 1901, 2nd edn., vol. 2, pp. 195 ff.

⁵⁶ On this and the following see esp. Wehler, *Bismarck*, pp. 412-502; cf. D. K. Fieldhouse, *Economics and Empire, 1830-1914*, London 1984, 4th edn., pp. 329-36; Baumgart, *Imperialism*, pp. 140-55; P. Hampe, *Die 'ökonomische Imperialismustheorie': Kritische Untersuchungen*, Munich 1976, pp. 271-98; W. J. Mommsen,

Imperialismustheorien: Ein Überblick über die neueren Imperialismusinterpretationen, Göttingen 1977, pp. 75-9; Craig, *Germany*, pp. 116-24; L. Gall, *Bismarck: Der weiße Revolutionär*, Frankfurt 1980, pp. 615-18; Gollwitzer, *Geschichte des weltpolitischen Denkens*, vol. 2, pp. 217-26; Stern, *Gold and Iron*, pp. 410-16; M. Stürmer, *Das ruhelose Reich: Deutschland 1866-1918*, Berlin 1983, pp. 230-3.

something between mere *Schutzerklärungen* and formalized direct territorial control, an attitude aptly described by H.-U. Wehler as a 'pragmatic policy of expansion'.

'I repeat that I am against colonies', Bismarck explained in the Reichstag on 26 June 1884, 'against colonies that procure a piece of land as a base, and then try to attract emigrants, appoint officials, and set up garrisons.' Against those eighteenth-century forms of colonial control that 'could at present be called the French system', Bismarck put up his charter concept modelled on the British system:

Meine von Seiner Majestät dem Kaiser gebilligte Absicht ist, die Verantwortlichkeit für die materielle Entwicklung der Kolonie ebenso wie ihr Entstehen der Tätigkeit und dem Unternehmungsgeiste unserer seefahrenden und handeltreibenden Mitbürger zu überlassen und weniger in der Form der Annektierung von überseeischen Provinzen an das deutsche Reich vorzugehen als in der Form von Gewährung von Freibriefen nach Gestalt der englischen Royal charters.⁵⁷

To the end, Bismarck remained 'against colonies' where the Reich had to take direct responsibility for territorial and control and administration. Instead, he voted for a semi-colonial overseas empire in which the Reich's liability was limited. This position was also a result of foreign and parliamentary policy considerations. If, step by step, Bismarck deviated from it, he did so only hesitantly and with great reluctance, and in response to unforeseen necessities arising from the course of German colonial history itself. Had these forces been apparent to him from the start, his 'colonial policy' may never have come into existence at all.

3.2 Foreign policy

The international situation of 1884-5 allowed Germany to make *Schutzerklärungen* without great risk: British and Russian interests were colliding in Central Asia and in the Near East; Italy and France were vying with each other in Tunis; France and Britain were competing in Egypt, West Africa, and the Congo. Added to this were the colonial interests of the Ferry government; they exacerbated disagreements between France and England, and pushed any thoughts of revenge *vis-à-vis* Germany into the background. Bismarck used the leeway this international situation gave him to confront the other powers entangled in overseas conflicts of interest with a colonial *fait accompli*; he had used a similar strategy to intervene in the Anglo-French conflict in Egypt, and it was also evident in the Franco-German co-operation at the West Africa Conference itself. Within a year, the basis of the German colonial empire had been laid. Ferry was ousted by Clemenceau in March 1885, and Gladstone's liberal cabinet was replaced by Salisbury's conservative one early in June; Salisbury quickly reduced the tension between Britain and Russia that had been an important factor in giving Bismarck a certain licence in international affairs. But by this time Germany's 'annexation period' was already over.

The international situation, however, did more than merely create the external conditions for Bismarck to act in. It also gave him scope to implement his 'colonial policy', while at the same time circumscribing it; ultimately, it remained a variable dependent on his European alliances. In 1885, against the background of the West

⁵⁷ *Sten. Ber.* 1884, vol. 2, Berlin, pp. 1061 f.

Africa Conference, Fabri gave an accurate picture of the significance of colonial policy in Bismarck's foreign policy:

Die Lage Deutschlands, in der Mitte Europas, nötigt für alle Zeiten die deutsche Reichsregierung, den Schwerpunkt ihrer politischen Macht durchaus in die kluge und kraftvolle Handhabung einer friedliebenden Politik in Europa zu legen. Jedes zu rasche und zu weitgehende kolonialpolitische Vorschreiten wäre für Deutschland ein Fehler, und das Bestreben vor allem eine Kolonialmacht werden zu wollen, würde eine verhängnisvolle Torheit sein. Deutschland kann nur unter fester Zusammenhaltung seiner Macht nebenbei Kolonialpolitik treiben.⁵⁸

This attitude was relected in the famous answer Bismarck gave in December 1888 to the Africa researcher and colonial politician, E. Wolf, who had far-reaching plans—obscuring an attempt to extend the German protectorate in East Africa into the interior—to set Emin Pasha free: 'Your map of Africa is all very well and good, but my map of Africa is in Europe. Here is Russia and here . . . is France and we are in the middle; this is my map of Africa.'⁵⁹ The same attitude can be seen in a correspondence between Bismarck and Fabri, who in June of the election year 1889 informed Bismarck that he would stand for election to the Reichstag, 'provided that, in this capacity, I would be in a position to be able to act, in the field of colonial policy, in accordance with Your Excellency's intentions'. At the time Bismarck was concerned with the collapse of the charter system and financing the first German colonial war in East Africa; he replied to Fabri's letter, through the agency of Herbert von Bismarck, saying that he would be delighted 'if you were elected to the Reichstag, as the main thing will be to work up some enthusiasm for colonies in the Reichstag, which has to make the funds available'. On Fabri's letter itself, however, he had heavily underlined the reference to his 'intentions', and had noted in the margin: 'These do not depend on colonial policy alone! I would be delighted if Fabri were elected, but I cannot give assurances that I will subordinate politics to his ambitions in a secondary area.'⁶⁰ Diverting political forces from the European metropolis to the overseas periphery played an important part in Bismarck's security policy and continental alliances.⁶¹ Therefore, his attempt to make sure that the Reich's scope for political action was circumscribed as little as possible by any risks or constraints arising from colonial policy was only consistent. Thus the logic of foreign policy was a factor in influencing Bismarck's vote for the Charter system, under which the Reich assumed only indirect political responsibility for the colonies.

3.3 *Domestic and parliamentary policy*

Although leading circles of the German colonial movement vastly overestimated the part they played in Bismarck's 'change of course', the *Schutzerklärungen* were in fact a concession not only to overseas economic interests but also, indirectly, to 'public

⁵⁸ F. Fabri, 'Deutsche Colonial-Politik', (reprinted from *Revue Coloniale Internationale*, 1 (1885)), p. 15.

⁵⁹ O. v. Bismarck, *Gesammelte Werke*, 15 vols., Berlin 1924-32, vol. 8, pp. 644-7, here p. 646.

⁶⁰ Fabri to Bismarck, 16 June 1889, ZStA Potsdam, RKA 6924, p. 99 (copy); Herbert v. Bismarck to Fabri,

22 June 1889, *ibid.*, p. 104 (draft); cf. Fabri to Goßler, 17 July 1889, ZStA Merseburg, Rep. 76 Va Sect. 3, tit. IV, no. 36, vol. 5, p. 81.

⁶¹ Summary now in Gall, *Bismarck*, pp. 619-41; for a concise overview see A. Hillgruber, *Bismarcks Außenpolitik*, Freiburg 1972.

opinion' whipped up by colonial propaganda. The domestic impact he wanted the *Schutzerklärungen* to have must be seen in the context of the strategies used for a variety of different purposes: to prolong the conservative policy, initiated in 1878-9, of promoting a union of agrarian and industrial interests that would be strong enough to dominate the Reichstag (*Sammlungspolitik*), to improve on the disappointing results of the 1881 election in that of 1884, to regain the support of the Reichstag majority, and to consolidate his own charismatic position. Another concern was to allow the prestige of overseas acquisitions to distract, at least temporarily, from the social tensions at home that could not be cured by the Anti-Socialist Law and social legislation. All these aspects of colonial policy were stabilizing factors as far as domestic and parliamentary policy were concerned; Wehler sums them up in the term 'manipulated social imperialism'. For years leading German colonial propagandists had written about them openly and temptingly; in this field, however, Bismarck had little to learn from the colonial movement.

In the spring of 1884 Bismarck, with the help of the loyal press, began to marshal colonial enthusiasm for his own ends.⁶² He allowed the Bismarck cult, deliberately cultivated in the hot-house of the 1884 election campaign, to celebrate him as a strong advocate of German interests overseas; at the same time he began to seek plebiscitary legitimation, declaring to the Reichstag in June 1884 that he could only pursue overseas policies 'if the nation enthusiastically supports the government'.⁶³ At the time of the West Africa Conference in January 1885 he impressed upon Count Münster, the wavering German ambassador to London, 'that, for reasons of domestic policy alone, the colonial question is a matter of life and death for us . . . The smallest tip of New Guinea, even if objectively completely worthless, is, at present, more important for our policy than the whole of Egypt and its future.'⁶⁴

The foundation of a 'second Reich' overseas did in fact secure Bismarck's political prestige on a new charismatic basis; contemporary colonial enthusiasts as well as nationalist historians decades later saw it as the 'necessary culmination of the founding of the Reich'.⁶⁵ According to Treitschke in November 1884, Germany's abrupt plunge into a colonial *Gründerzeit* (thus Gollwitzer) had the effect of an 'electric shock' and moved the whole nation 'to cry out joyfully, at last, at last!'. It unleashed a national enthusiasm that was comparable in intensity to that of 1871, though shorter lived and less significant as a collective phenomenon.⁶⁶

Despite 'the importance of the colonial question for our domestic policies', which Bismarck tried to impress upon Count Münster,⁶⁷ there were also reasons arising from the same causes for him to concede the 'colonial question' as little independence as possible as a political issue. The decisive factor was that considerations of foreign policy and of parliamentary policy overlapped: Bismarck was anxious not to extend the Reichstag's 'parliamentary parade-ground' by adding to it colonial policy, which impinged upon 'high politics'.⁶⁸ This also presupposed that the Reich remained as

⁶² On this and the following, see Wehler, *Bismarck*, pp. 474-85.

⁶³ See n. 57 above.

⁶⁴ J. Lepsius, A. Mendelsohn-Bartholdy, F. Thimme (eds.), *Die Große Politik der europäischen Kabinette 1871-1914: Sammlung der Diplomatischen Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes*, 40 vols., Berlin 1922-7, vol. 4, pp. 96 f.

⁶⁵ Hagen, *Bismarcks Kolonialpolitik*, p. 659.

⁶⁶ *Preussische Jahrbücher*, 54 (1884), p. 561; Gollwitzer, *Geschichte des weltpolitischen Denkens*, vol. 2, p. 226.

⁶⁷ See n. 64 above.

⁶⁸ On this see the contribution by W. J. Mommsen in this volume.

aloof as possible from any direct involvement in the colonial administration, in terms of both political and financial responsibility (the Reichstag had the right of veto over the colonial budget).

If we examine the significance that the three major policy areas under discussion here as providing the background to the *Schutzerklärungen* of 1884–5 had for Bismarck's concept of 'colonial policy' we come to the following conclusions: in each case there were determining factors and developmental conditions that motivated overseas expansion, or made it possible in the first place; at the same time, there were opposing forces that made Bismarck try to confine 'colonial policy' to a subordinate role in an area of calculable risks. The lowest common denominator, a policy that accommodated economic interests and satisfied pro-colonial 'public opinion' while turning it to some domestic political use without going beyond the limits imposed by foreign and parliamentary policy, was the *charter system* introduced by Bismarck in the Reichstag in June 1884 and politely rejected by Woermann at the German *Handelstag* in January 1885. It had prompted Fabri to speak of Bismarck's 'idealistic notions of colonial policy', which were so far removed from his renowned *Realpolitik*: 'protection for trade policy does not constitute a colonial policy', was Fabri's view, and in 1889 he pointed to the inconsistency 'that in a period of protective tariffs and public welfare assistance, the government's colonial policy is based on the idea *laissez-aller*'.⁶⁹

4. THE WEST AFRICA CONFERENCE, THE CHARTER SYSTEM, AND BISMARCK'S 'FAILED HOPES' IN AFRICA

The place of the West Africa Conference in Bismarck's colonial calculations and in the context of German colonial history in Africa must also be examined against the background of international power politics, domestic policy, and foreign trade policy.

4.1 *Foreign policy, domestic affairs, and foreign trade policy*

Uppermost in Bismarck's mind, in every respect, were foreign policy interests in Europe (which we cannot pursue here), especially *vis-à-vis* Britain and going far beyond narrow 'colonial policy'.⁷⁰ In the period of *Schutzerklärungen* (1884–5) these included a successful attempt to achieve some sort of diplomatic recognition of Germany as a new but equal colonial power playing the part of an intermediary. This meant that German colonial policy would assume the guise of a 'policy for peace abroad', and Bismarck himself that of a 'peace broker'; it was all interpreted as a sign 'that Germany's colonial course would not pose a threat to anybody; on the contrary, it would be a new guarantee of peace in Europe'.⁷¹ For Bismarck, however, the West Africa Conference was in essence almost exclusively a forum for European power politics; with regard to African colonial policy, it was not more than play-acting. A suspicion soon grew that, beyond its basis in trade policy, Bismarck's African 'colonial policy' too was no more than an African means to a European end. Only five years later this suspicion had

⁶⁹ Fabri, *Kolonialpolitik*, pp. 26, 71, and 79.

⁷⁰ See n. 68 above.

⁷¹ J. Miquel, *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung*, Mar. 1886,

p. 304; Fabri, 'Colonial-Politik', p. 15; id., 'Koloniale Aufgaben', p. 542.

grown so strong among leading circles in the colonial movement that in retrospect, and against the background of the 1890 Heligoland-Zanzibar treaty prepared by Bismarck, the caustic comments made by the Russian newspaper *Nowosti* found some support: obviously the German government was not pursuing colonial policy 'in order to promote Germany's overseas interests, but merely so that it could influence other countries on European issues'.⁷²

The West Africa Conference must also be seen in the context of Bismarck's hopes that a prestigious and successful colonial policy would have an impact on domestic policy. But at home, the colonial map game had almost been exhausted with the *Schutzerklärungen*, and the Conference itself was practically lost sight of in the general colonial fever. In 1888 even the *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung* saw the reason for 'this big political campaign falling into oblivion so quickly in the national consciousness' in the fact that 'vigorous and practical state colonization began in the period immediately preceding the Conference':

Der Tat mußten die Worte weichen. Auf Straßen und Gassen sang man Kamerunlieder, was kümmerte uns die Kongo-Konferenz, von deren eigentlichen Aufgaben wir herzlich wenig wußten. Man kann behaupten, gerade die schnell erwachte hell auflodernde Begeisterung für unsere ersten staatlichen kolonialen Erwerbungen bewirkte, daß dem ersten wichtigen theoretischen Schritte auf diesem Wege, dem Versuch, eine Art internationale Kolonisationsordnung zu schaffen, der Kongo-Konferenz, in ihrer Vorgeschichte, in ihrem Verlauf wie in ihrer dauernden Bedeutung nicht die Stellung im Bewußtsein der Nation geschafft wurde, die sie verdiente und auch heute noch verdient.⁷³

Given the disappointing course of German colonial history, Bismarck may in retrospect have come to regard the establishment of a free trade zone on the Congo as the most profitable success of German colonial policy.⁷⁴

The aspects of the Conference relating to foreign trade policy, while certainly significant, may well have been less important to Bismarck than foreign policy interests. After all, the 'German interests' on the Congo that needed 'protection' had barely begun to be established, despite the fact that the vociferous protests made by the domestic chambers of commerce and by the seaboard towns were deliberately placed at the beginning of the Conference's official documentation. And anyway, German Africa traders did not stop complaining about obstacles to free trade, even in the free trade zone.⁷⁵ In this context, Bismarck's original intention may indeed have been more important: namely, in the interests of the Reich to slow down, at least temporarily, the scramble for Africa, thus defusing the ever more incalculable risks associated with it, especially as Germany had been sucked into the wake of this 'scramble' in the *Schutzerklärungen* in South West and West Africa.⁷⁶

Finally, the humanitarian aims that were discussed in Berlin and found their way into Paragraphs 6 and 9 of the Berlin West Africa Act generally fulfilled the well-known function of legitimizing imperialism in the context of a belief in a civilizing mission.⁷⁷ To Bismarck, they were irrelevant. And apart from disastrous developments on the Congo itself, the true nature of these aims was exposed in Bismarck's time by

⁷² Fabri, *Der deutsch-englische Vertrag*, pp. 7 f. and 19.

⁷³ *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung*, Jan. 1888, p. 57.

⁷⁴ Craig, *Germany*, pp. 123 f.

⁷⁵ Washausen, *Hamburg*, pp. 155 f.

⁷⁶ See the contribution by W. J. Mommsen in this volume; cf. Wehler, *Bismarck*, p. 381.

the course of German colonial history in Africa. The same is true of the provisions governing forms of 'effective' possession in Paragraphs 34 and 35 of the Congo Act.

4.2 Humanitarianism 'beyond the purposes of the Conference'

The contemporary discussion of protection for Africa's indigenous population focused on two issues: the trade in spirits and the slave trade.

4.2.1 Trade in spirits

A considerable proportion of the German *Branntwein* (spirits) exported to Africa, largely through the port of Hamburg, consisted of spirit distilled from potatoes in East Elbia, as referred to above. During the agricultural crisis, its production and export became increasingly important. While an average of 49,000 tons was exported each year between 1870 and 1879, this figure rose to 77,000 tons between 1880 and 1886. When international competition increased after 1883 in this trade as in others, exporters concentrated more and more on their West African markets (as well as on duty-free imports into Spain). In 1884 West Africa accounted for two fifths of the total exports of this form of spirits from Germany.⁷⁸ As early as 1876 Bismarck, who himself owned four distilleries, fully acknowledged the 'great economic significance of the spirits industry for a large part of Germany', and gave an assurance that he would 'continue in future to grasp every opportunity' to promote it.⁷⁹

Bismarck stood by his word also at the West Africa Conference when the British and the Belgian delegates suggested imposing import duties on spirits (and arms) such as Woermann had feared in Cameroon, where they had been avoided by the German *Schutzerklärung*. Woermann, whose company was most heavily involved in the export of German spirits to West Africa, was a 'technical delegate' in the German delegation and as such submitted various 'experts' reports of crucial significance', warning against 'imposing any restrictions' on the West Africa coastal trade. He repeatedly emphasized that the 'British proposal would inevitably result in considerable damage to our trade'. Woermann, who had in the past championed the interests of 'the German nation', especially when they coincided with his own business interests, considered that any restrictions imposed on the West Africa trade in alcohol would lead to the 'disappearance of an important link in the chain of the German nation's economic life'. The German delegates, however, did not need convincing by Woermann. Bismarck himself strictly forbade them to vote for any control on the import of spirits—something he regarded as 'beyond the purposes of the Conference'. Only Germany and the Netherlands opposed these measures in Berlin on the grounds that they were 'restrictions or prohibitions based purely on humanitarian considerations'.⁸⁰ Therefore Paragraph 6 of the Congo Act contained only vague

⁷⁷ On this in general see H. Loth, *Kolonialismus und 'Humanitätsintervention': Kritische Untersuchung der Politik Deutschlands gegenüber dem Kongostaat, 1884-1908*, Berlin 1966, pp. 33-8; Wehler, *Bismarck*, p. 375; W. J. Mommsen, *Das Zeitalter des Imperialismus*, Frankfurt 1969, p. 17; K. Hammer, *Weltmission und Kolonialismus: Sendungsideologien des 19. Jahrhunderts im Konflikt*, Munich 1978; K. J. Bade (ed.), *Imperialismus und Kolonialmission*, Introduction, pp. 13-22, and S. Miers's contribution in this volume.

⁷⁸ On this see Wehler, *Bismarck*, pp. 87-95; cf. Bade, *Fabri*, pp. 272-9; cf. id., 'Mission und Kolonialbewegung', pp. 117-22.

⁷⁹ Bismarck, *Werke*, vol. 14, II, p. 874, quoted in: Wehler, *Bismarck*, p. 325.

⁸⁰ G. Königk, *Die Berliner Kongo-Konferenz 1884-1885: Ein Beitrag zur Kolonialpolitik Bismarcks*, Essen 1938, pp. 163 f.; Loth, *Kolonialismus*, p. 36; M. Nußbaum, *Vom 'Kolonialenthusiasmus' zur Kolonialpolitik der Monopole*, Berlin 1962, p. 123; Wehler, *Bismarck*, pp. 326 and 387 f.

expressions 'concerning the protection of the indigenous population', and no detailed measures to curb the flourishing imports of spirits. As events in the German protectorate of Cameroon were soon to show, however, this trade posed a grave threat to the undertaking, enshrined in the same paragraph, 'to preserve the indigenous population and to improve their lives in moral and material terms'.⁸¹

In 1885 Fabri convened a mission conference in Bremen; it was attended by Consul Raschdau, dispatched by Bismarck as a delegate from the German foreign ministry. Mission representatives, shocked by the sudden increase in the export of German spirits to West Africa, resolved to apply to Berlin for a revision of the relevant clause in the Congo Act. Raschdau was able to block this move. He reported his success to Bismarck in the following terms:

Der Antrag, Eure Durchlaucht zu bitten, nachträglich die Aufnahme eines den Spirituosenimport betreffenden Zusatzes in die Kongo-Akte zu vermitteln, wurde auf meinen Einwand, daß ein solcher Antrag bei der Lage der Verhältnisse und mit Rücksicht auf die über die Spirituosenfrage in der Kongo-Konferenz geführten Erörterungen aussichtslos sei, zurückgezogen.⁸²

Even at the Anti-slavery Conference held in Brussels in 1889-90, Bismarck was able to fend off any drastic increase in import duties on spirits to West Africa,⁸³ while Woermann explained to the Reichstag in 1889 that the trade in *Branntwein* had been 'the point at which the Germans were first able to gain entry to the West Africa trade. It allowed us to establish ourselves so firmly that we now have quite considerable power there.'⁸⁴

Statistics confirm Woermann's assessment. While the total value of German exports to all its African colonies (Cameroon, Togo, German East Africa, and German South West Africa) was only 5.7 million marks in 1891, even dropping to 4.4 million marks by 1894—insignificant in the context of the whole economy—the value of alcohol exports to Cameroon alone rose to 593,678 marks in 1891, and by 1894 had almost doubled to 980,061 marks. In 1894 the export of spirits to Cameroon accounted for almost one third of the total value of German exports to the whole of West Africa, while by the same year in Togo the import of spirits had become the largest single item, worth 676,013 marks, in the German colonial trade.⁸⁵

4.2.2 *Slavery and the slave trade*

Bismarck displayed much the same attitude towards the obligation recognized by the signatory powers in Paragraphs 6 and 9 of the Congo Act 'to work towards the suppression of slavery and, in particular, the slave trade'. This affected Germany only in the DOAG's East African possessions that came under the Reich's 'protection' on 27 February 1885, one day after the end of the West Africa Conference. But the horrors of the slave hunts and the slave trade as described by the German 'anti-slavery movement', which came into being at the end of 1888, had long since been relegated to the realm of history in German East Africa.

⁸¹ See section 4.2.2.

⁸² Raschdau to Bismarck, 2 Nov. 1885, ZStA Potsdam, RKA 6894, p. 14; *Allgemeine Missions-Zeitschrift*, Dec. 1885, p. 549.

⁸³ Klauß, *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft*, p. 188;

⁸⁴ Woermann in the Reichstag on 14 May 1889, Sten. Ber. 1889, p. 1743; cf. Washausen, *Hamburg*, p. 184.

⁸⁵ Fitzner, *Deutsches Kolonial-Handbuch*, vol. 1, pp. 20 and 85, U. v. Hassel, *Deutschlands Kolonien*, Stuttgart 1897, pp. 47 ff.; Nußbaum, *Kolonialpolitik*, p. 127; Wehler, *Bismarck*, p. 325.

In fact, slavery continued to exist as a social institution throughout the German colonial period; the conditions under which slaves in German East Africa lived, however, were not accurately described by the dreadful images conjured up by the German 'anti-slavery movement'. Slaves kept by Arabs and Africans for domestic and other work did not, as a rule, suffer under a brutal yoke; they lived in a relationship of dependence similar to feudal serfdom that, in some respects, seemed more humane than, for example, the 'training of the natives for work' practised in the first two decades of German colonial rule on plantations in Cameroon, New Guinea, and East Africa. Slaves used as bearers or carriers worked and lived under considerably harsher conditions than did domestic and other slaves. But while they continued to be the traditional human means of transportation in East Africa, they no longer represented the 'black ivory' of the days of slave hunts and the slave trade. It was not only rich Arab traders who exchanged some of their merchandise inland for bearers who carried export goods to the coast and then brought imported goods inland again; into the 1890s European expeditions, even those that had set out to 'suppress the slave trade', bought slaves as bearers too. The long columns of bearer slaves, however, had nothing in common with the infamous slave caravans of the past.⁸⁶

Bismarck was totally indifferent to the problem of slavery and the slave trade: 'Slavery had existed for thousands of years and, in many cases, is not as bad as is often thought; it would not have made any difference if it had been allowed to go on for another ten or twenty years.'⁸⁷ Three weeks after the end of the West Africa Conference, when G. Rohlfs, the German Consul in Zanzibar, raised the question of emancipation of the slaves in a report, Bismarck sent a harsh rebuke by telegram: 'Slaves are no concern of yours.'⁸⁸ The German foreign ministry was bound by a directive stating that the Governor of German East Africa was 'not generally authorized to deal with slavery' as in terms of public law the protectorate was a foreign country. Thus the *Schutzerklärung* had no bearing on the 'continued existence of slavery'.⁸⁹ Cardinal Lavigerie appealed to the German envoy to Brussels, von Alvensleben, and to Bismarck himself in August 1888 for German co-operation in a 'crusade' he was trying to organize against the internal African slave trade. Bismarck's response was not merely an indifferent 'why?' In his marginal comments he lashed out at references he considered downright 'hypocritical' to an alleged Christian duty. 'My interest is limited to whites, and in particular, to Germans.' His order, written in the margin, was 'Deus nobis haec otia non fecit, do *not* answer', and he noted: 'There is no need for me to comment.'⁹⁰

Bismarck emphasized throughout that he was 'not an ardent supporter of the anti-slavery movement'. Nevertheless, a 'German necessity' arose shortly thereafter 'to establish contact with Cardinal Lavigerie'; this was part of a successful attempt to legitimize the suppression of the uprising in German East Africa by presenting it as a

⁸⁶ F. F. Müller, *Deutschland — Zanzibar — Ostafrika, 1884–1890*, Berlin 1959, pp. 72 ff., 267 ff., 357 ff., 376 ff., 392 ff., and 458 ff.; K. Büttner, *Die Anfänge der deutschen Kolonialpolitik in Ostafrika*, Berlin 1959, pp. 108 ff.; Loth, *Kolonialismus*, pp. 15 and 39–46; id., *Griff nach Ostafrika*, Berlin 1968, pp. 38 ff.; Klauß, *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft*, pp. 208 ff.; R. Tetzlaff, *Koloniale Entwicklung und Ausbeutung: Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte Deutsch-Ostafrikas, 1885–1914*, Berlin 1970,

pp. 13 ff. and 30; Bade, *Fabri*, pp. 257–71 and 278 f.

⁸⁷ Bismarck, *Werke*, vol. 9, p. 433.

⁸⁸ 'Anweisung für telegrafische Instruktion', ZStA Potsdam, RKA 1002, p. 14.

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 12 f.; cf. Hagen, *Bismarcks Kolonialpolitik*, p. 180.

⁹⁰ F. J. v. Alvensleben to Bismarck, 25 Aug. 1888, ZStA Potsdam, RKA 7362, pp. 22–6; 'Votum Krauel zur Eingabe von Lavigerie', 21 Aug. 1888, *ibid.*, pp. 40–6.

struggle against a 'revolt of Arab slave traders'.⁹¹ This alone—and not humanitarian ideals—made Bismarck suddenly urge: 'Can't we get hold of some gruesome details about human torture?'⁹² In October 1888 the DKG propaganda against 'Arab slave traders' set in motion the biggest mass manipulation that had taken place in German colonial history. It was kept up only until what K. Peters, founder of the DOAG, later called the 'humbug of the anti-slavery nonsense'⁹³ had achieved its aim in the first German colonial war in East Africa. Even the Brussels Anti-Slavery Conference in 1889–90 was not able to revive the short-lived German 'anti-slavery movement'. 'The main difficulty in liberating the slaves', reported the governor of German East Africa caustically in 1891, was 'that they do not want to be liberated. The black would much rather be a slave among his own people—where not much work is required and punishment is rare, although when it is exercised, it may take barbaric forms—than a free worker for the whites. Europeans demand a great deal, and the pushing around, complaining and blows never end . . . Liberation would, in fact, represent the beginning of slavery for them.'⁹⁴

This was true not only of German East Africa; it applied even more to Cameroon, where the recruitment of labour was not controlled by the colonial authorities, but by plantation and trading firms that initially combined to form powerful franchise companies. The chronic demand for workers led them, from time to time, to employ methods of recruitment that were not far removed from those of the much criticized Arab slave traders: official and semi-official 'recruiting officers', who were equipped with identity cards but, for good reasons, evaded government controls, set out to hunt down able-bodied workers all over the country in the name of the franchise companies, receiving a bonus of fifty pfennigs for every person 'recruited'. Workers were rounded up like game and imprisoned until a sufficiently large number had been caught. Then they were chained together like an Arab slave caravan and deported to the plantations as 'voluntary workers', where the work 'frequently resulted in death'. Added to this was the influx of alcohol into the country. These methods meant that soon whole sections of the population were exterminated. In 1911 even Woermann's employees had to admit that after only twenty-five years of German rule the 'depopulation of the Cameroons' was imminent.⁹⁵

4.3 'Effective' occupation: Bismarck's 'failed hopes' in Africa

In the light of German colonial history, the issue of 'effective' occupation⁹⁶ appears as contradictory as the humanitarian concerns negotiated at the West Africa Conference.

⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 87 and 101; *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung*, NS Apr. 1891, p. 145; on this K. J. Bade, 'Antisklavereibewegung in Deutschland und Kolonialkrieg in Deutsch-Ostafrika, 1888–1890: Bismarck und Friedrich Fabri', in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 3 (1977), pp. 31–58; cf. H. Gründer, '“Gott will es”: Eine Kreuzzugsbewegung am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts', in *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, 28 (1977), pp. 210–24.

⁹² ZStA Potsdam, RKA 7362, p. 113; cf., Klauß, *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft*, p. 222.

⁹³ K. Peters to his brother H. Peters, 10 Jan. 1892, ZStA Potsdam, NL Peters 93, pp. 12–15.

⁹⁴ *Deutsches Kolonialblatt*, 1 Dec. 1891, p. 511, quoted

in Loth, *Ostafrika*, p. 41; S. Miers, 'The Brussels Conference in 1889–1890: The Place of the Slave Trade in the Politics of Great Britain and Germany' in P. Gifford and R. Louis (eds.), *Britain and Germany in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule*, New Haven 1967, pp. 83–118.

⁹⁵ K. Hausen, *Deutsche Kolonialherrschaft in Afrika: Wirtschaftsinteressen und Kolonialverwaltung in Kamerun vor 1914*, Freiburg 1970, pp. 274–90; A. Wirz, *Vom Sklavenhandel zum kolonialen Handel: Wirtschaftsräume und Wirtschaftsformen in Kamerun vor 1914*, Freiburg 1972, p. 25; Bade, *Fabri*, pp. 271 f.

⁹⁶ Königk, *Kongo-Konferenz*, pp. 158–62; cf. Fieldhouse, *Economics and Empire*, pp. 348 f.

Article 34 of the Berlin West Africa Act outlined the obligation accepted by the signatory powers to notify each other of any new protectorates declared in Africa. Bismarck met this obligation *vis-à-vis* the astonished signatory powers by announcing the German *Schutzerklärung* in East Africa which took place immediately after the end of the Conference. But as far as the commitment enshrined in Paragraph 35 was concerned, namely 'to ensure the presence of an authority in occupied coastal areas of the African continent sufficient to protect . . . acquired rights', the founder of the German colonial empire created his own stumbling blocks.

Bismarck's early ideas for a system of chartered companies in Africa were modelled on the British idea that 'the flag follows trade'. Bismarck's expectation was that trade itself would readily assume responsibility for the 'flag' and for the cost of colonial rule, while the Reich would merely offer 'protection', but his illusions regarding the charter system were destroyed by the tensions generated by political and economic interests. While the 'flag' followed trade, trade was not prepared to take responsibility for the flag, except perhaps for a short time, and banking capital only reluctantly followed trade and the flag with direct investments because the unstable colonial 'authorities' were unable to guarantee security.

By the end of the 1880s the German experiment in colonial policy had already run into trouble: in Togo and Cameroon the desired charter system never materialized; in South West Africa the Herero simply cancelled it in 1888; and in East Africa it collapsed in the uprising of the same year. Dreams of an *aurora colonialis* were succeeded by a colonial nightmare: the hopes of a predominantly middle-class colonial movement remained largely unfulfilled; commercial capital had not assumed political responsibility, or had failed; banking capital remained aloof; and German colonial rule itself was seriously weakened in South West and in East Africa.⁹⁷

In the crisis facing German colonial rule in Africa, Bismarck still hesitated—for the reasons discussed above—to establish a direct administration in all German colonies in Africa and to strengthen the institutional structures in Berlin correspondingly.⁹⁸ This attitude ultimately led to an open confrontation with leading circles of the organized colonial movement, who recognized 'more and more signs of uncertainty' in Bismarck's 'colonial policy', and increasingly regarded it as an 'experiment without any method behind it': 'Starting from the impracticable idea of colonies run by private companies, there was no clear, feasible programme or firm leadership in any particular direction.'⁹⁹ In the months preceding his downfall Bismarck's uncertainty contributed significantly to his isolation because colonial interests occupied very strong positions in the Reichstag. Thus, in a paradoxical reversal of the hopes placed in colonial expansion a decade earlier, a German crisis on the African periphery had immediate and serious repercussions on the domestic politics of the metropolitan country.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ For an overview see Bade, *Kolonialexpansion in Afrika*, pp. 23-35; cf. A. Wirz, 'Die deutschen Kolonien in Afrika', in R. v. Albertini, *Europäische Kolonialherrschaft, 1880-1940*, pp. 301-27.

⁹⁸ On the history of the German colonial administration see E. Kade, *Die Anfänge der deutschen Kolonial-Zentralverwaltung*, Würzburg 1939; E. R. Huber, *Deutsche Verfassungsgeschichte seit 1789*, 6 vols., Stuttgart 1957-81, vol. 4: *Stuktur und Krisen des Kaiserreiches*,

Stuttgart 1969, pp. 604-34; for Africa, L. H. Gann and P. Guignan, *The Rulers of German Africa, 1884-1914*, Stanford 1977, pp. 45-86;

⁹⁹ Fabri, *Kolonialpolitik*, pp. 102 and 118-45; id., *Der deutsch-englische Vertrag*, pp. 20 f.

¹⁰⁰ H. Pogge v. Strandmann, 'Domestic Origins of Germany's Colonial Expansion under Bismarck', in *Past and Present*, 42 (1969), pp. 140-59; Bade, *Fabri*, pp. 315-50.

In October 1889 Bismarck curtly explained to Michahelles, German Consul General in Zanzibar, that he had 'had enough of colonies'.¹⁰¹ All the more stubbornly did he cling to the idea, right to the end, that in the context of European security policy, he could 'pursue colonial policy as a sideline'. In doing so he himself underestimated the 'importance of the colonial question for our domestic policies', which he had impressed so clearly upon Count Münster in 1885. Ultimately, for Bismarck himself, 'for domestic reasons', the colonial policy of 'failed hopes' in Africa that Woermann had warned against in 1885, became 'a matter of life and death'.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Wehler, *Bismarck*, p. 409.

¹⁰² Sources for the quotations in notes 38, 58, 64, and 67.

B

The Origins of the Conference

Bismarck, the Concert of Europe, and the Future of West Africa, 1883-1885

WOLFGANG J. MOMMSEN

Until the 1880s the non-European world was if at all then rather unevenly represented in the councils of Europe, as contemporary diplomats would have put it. The United States of America, which had emancipated itself from colonial domination, preferred, for ideological and other reasons, largely to stay aloof from what they saw as the petty wheeling and dealing of European diplomacy; as a rule, they were not asked, or were disinclined, to participate in the international gatherings and conferences which, after the Congress of Vienna, had become one of the main instruments of European diplomacy. The territories of the British Empire were represented at best indirectly by the government at Westminster; otherwise only the vast territories of the Ottoman Empire, which by tradition were considered part of the European system of powers, were represented, though not as effectively, as the European powers had thought it more convenient to keep alive the 'Sick Man at the Bosphorus', albeit under the joint tutelage of the powers, than to give any leeway to the various nationalist movements in the Balkans and in the Arab territories with all their potentially explosive consequences. A series of European agreements—the last had been the Congress of Berlin in 1878 on the Oriental question—had regulated Ottoman affairs in the interests of the European powers (and at least indirectly in the interests of European bondholders). Most North African territories were still nominally under the suzerainty of the Sultan of Constantinople. Hence they were also affected by these international agreements, albeit largely indirectly. This was the case in particular with regard to Egypt, which had been subjected to informal finance-imperialist control by means of the *Caisse de la Dette Publique* supplemented by the so-called Dual Control exercised by representatives of Great Britain and France.¹ A special international agreement concerning Morocco had been concluded in 1880, opening up the country to economic penetration by the West, while nominally its international status as a dependence of the Ottoman Empire was guaranteed by the powers.² But the rest of Africa was not yet subject to any international agreements; from the vantage point of European politics it was considered a no man's land where everybody was justified in establishing informal or formal colonial control in so far as the territories in question had not already been appropriated by any of the established colonial powers, namely Great Britain, France, and Portugal. In other words, most of Africa remained outside the jurisdiction of international law, and was at best only indirectly integrated into the operations of the concert of Europe.

¹ Cf. D. S. Landes, *Bankers and Pashas: International Finance and Economic Imperialism in Egypt*, London 1958; W. J. Mommsen, *Imperialismus in Ägypten*, Munich 1956; A. Schölch, *Ägypten den Ägyptern: Die politische und*

gesellschaftliche Krise der Jahre 1878-1882 in Ägypten, Zurich 1973.

² See also D. K. Fieldhouse, *Economics and Empire 1880-1914*, London 1973, p. 272.

This constellation changed rapidly in the 1880s, with the French occupation of Tunisia in 1881 and the British occupation of Egypt in the following year. Especially the latter step more or less directly affected the interests of other European powers, notably France. During these years, major historical processes got under way, which were fundamentally to alter the conditions under which colonial rule operated during the era of free trade imperialism:

- (a) a gradual crumbling of earlier forms of informal and semi-formal imperialist penetration, which made it necessary to establish far more direct and more effective forms of colonial control;
- (b) the emergence of strong imperialist movements in various European countries, including Imperial Germany, which forced diplomats to pay far more attention to colonial issues than hitherto, however reluctantly, and to give way to demands for government assistance to trading interests in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East and engagement in overseas regions to a degree mostly unknown so far;
- (c) a shift in the balance of power within the European Concert of Powers towards the centre, notably in favour of Imperial Germany, which since 1871 had emerged as the dominant power on the European continent.

The events which led to the convening of the West Africa Conference, and to the gradual partitioning of most African territories among the European powers, will have to be assessed simultaneously from two vantage points. We must take into account first the fundamental changes in the nature of imperialist expansion which came about in the early 1880s and second the dynamic of the concert of Europe with Imperial Germany playing a key role. In the diplomatic manoeuvres of the powers, overseas territories were often used as mere pawns in order to achieve objectives entirely confined to the European political arena and not as worthy objects in themselves. The Berlin West Africa Conference of 1884-5 was actually less concerned with only African affairs than a reading of the rather meagre protocols of the proceedings would suggest.³ Prince Bismarck played a key role in the diplomatic negotiations which eventually led to an attempt to settle the controversial future of the Congo Basin in an international conference, which operated in accordance with the classic rules of international politics. Perhaps this was so because Bismarck was less directly interested in the future of West Africa than either the French, the British, or the Portuguese, but was instead keen to improve Imperial Germany's standing within the European system of powers.

It may be safe to conclude that what was throughout the summer of 1884 foremost in Bismarck's mind was partially to deflect France from its rigid anti-German attitude, which was focused upon recovering the provinces Alsace and Lorraine lost in 1871. Germany could attempt to do this by helping France along the path towards colonial expansion. For that matter, it may also have been foremost in Bismarck's mind to forge a Franco-German *entente* directed against what he assumed to be a British claim for paramountcy all over the world, paying little regard to the colonial interests of other nations. It certainly suited Bismarck's intentions that at that moment, as a consequence

³ There are only two thorough assessments of the West Africa Conference of 1884-5, neither quite up to date: G. König, *Die Berliner Kongo-Konferenz, 1884-1885*, Essen 1938, and S. E. Crowe, *The Berlin West African Conference 1884-1885*, repr. Westport, Conn. 1970. The

Proceedings of the West Africa Conference in R. J. Gavin and J. A. Betley (eds.), *The Scramble for Africa*, Ibadan UP 1973, pp. 128 ff. See also: H. Ganslmeier (ed.), *Protocoles et Acte Général de la Conférence de Berlin, 1884-1885*, Bremen 1984.

of the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty signed on 26 February 1884, the West African theatre attained prime importance. In this treaty Portugal's territorial 'rights' in the Congo Basin were extended to the mouth of the Congo, thus forestalling a possible seizure of this region by France. This sudden and ill-prepared step by Great Britain provided a first-rate opportunity for Bismarck's move. Ever since William A. Langer, it has been argued time and again, with much justification, that Imperial Germany indeed stood to gain much by diverting France's nationalistic energies to the periphery of Europe, as this would strengthen Imperial Germany's exposed position in the centre of Europe, and that this was the prime motive behind Bismarck's objection to the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty.⁴ The general strategy of German foreign policy in overseas affairs since 1871 was indeed to divert tensions to the colonial periphery, as this paper will show in some detail. Yet it would appear that Bismarck's main motive in these months was to teach Great Britain a lesson. Britain had not only handled the colonial claims of Imperial Germany in a most careless, deprecatory manner, but had also attempted to forestall the German move to establish a 'Protected Territory' in Angra Pequena. The British government had been pushed into this policy somewhat against her own inclinations by the Cape Colony.

Bismarck is reported to have said, although on a much later occasion when his always rather limited enthusiasm for colonial acquisitions had given way to a deep disillusionment, that his 'map of Africa was in Europe'.⁵ This was equally true of the heyday of Bismarck's imperialism; indeed his policies concerning West African affairs in 1884 and 1885 were to no small degree determined by European considerations. In a way the diplomatic offensive on West Africa which he launched from early May 1884 was part and parcel of his European policies, which were designed above all to stabilize the latent hegemonial status which Imperial Germany enjoyed on the European continent and, as far as possible, to prevent any major hostile coalition coming into being against Germany. But at the same time the decision to join forces with France in challenging Britain and Portugal in West Africa was closely connected with moves to defend German business interests against intrusions by rival powers and to establish 'Protected Territories' elsewhere in Africa.

Since 1875 the key to Bismarck's diplomacy had been a carefully calculated strategy of diverting the aggressive energies of the major European powers away from the centre of Europe to the colonial periphery, as Theodor Schieder so aptly put it long ago. For this reason whenever an opportunity arose to do so, Bismarck chose cautiously to encourage the Western powers to engage directly in Africa and the Middle East, by establishing either colonial rule or, if this was feasible, informal control, while Imperial Germany itself was to abstain from such activities. At the Congress of Berlin Bismarck encouraged Disraeli to annex Cyprus, and he also let it be known to the French that he would not oppose French annexation of Tunisia. At the same time, he worked assiduously, though very cautiously, to get the British directly involved in

⁴ W. A. Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments, 1871-1890*, New York 1962, pp. 301 ff. L. Gall, *Bismarck: Der weiße Revolutionär*, Berlin 1982, pp. 620-1. This thesis is developed most radically by A. J. P. Taylor, who, however, goes much too far in arguing that all the German colonial policies of these years were just

machinations in order to pick quarrels with Great Britain. Cf. *Germany's First Bid for Colonies 1884-1885*, New York, 1970.

⁵ Statement made by Bismarck on 5 Dec. 1888 to a German traveller in Africa. Quoted by Gall, *Bismarck*, p. 623.

Egyptian affairs, preferably under the legal pretext of a demand for assistance from the Sultan of Constantinople.⁶

In the *Varziner Diktat* of June 1877, the most famous of all of Bismarck's diplomatic memoranda, we find the following passage: 'I wish the British to be encouraged in their aspirations concerning Egypt, without however doing so conspicuously . . .'.⁷ In his view Great Britain by becoming directly involved in the Middle East would establish a British interest in preserving the political status quo in the Orient. At the same time it would prevent Britain from maintaining an intimate relationship with France because of their Egyptian differences. This would create ideal preconditions for bringing about an equilibrium of power in Europe in which Imperial Germany would play the role of an *arbiter*. Among other things Bismarck considered the following constellation to be optimal from a German point of view:

1. . . .
2. . . .
3. A 'status quo' satisfactory to England and Russia which would give them the same interest in maintaining the present situation as we have ourselves.
4. The dissolution of the bonds between England and France (which will always remain hostile to us) because of Egypt and the Mediterranean.
5. . . .⁸

During the following years international politics took exactly the direction which Bismarck had envisaged to be most advantageous to Imperial Germany. In 1881 France established itself in Tunisia. To the dismay of the French, Great Britain occupied Egypt in 1882, not without the clandestine assistance of Bismarck. Britain then desperately attempted to restore a comprador government there under the puppet regime of the Khedive Tewfic, that would grant Great Britain sufficient informal control, politically and financially, in Egyptian affairs to enable the occupation to be discontinued; in the event this turned out to be a Herculean task, especially as the French government was using all the remaining levers of foreign control, that is, the *Caisse de la Dette Publique*, in order to make life difficult for the British. Not unnaturally, Bismarck was inclined to exploit the Egyptian crisis for his own purposes from the start. In line with his general strategy of embroiling Great Britain not only with France, but also, though to a lesser degree, with Russia, he now demanded that Germany and Russia should have a share in running the *Caisse de la Dette Publique*. While the German government had previously actively discouraged all German investment in Egyptian bonds, Bismarck now had his son Herbert point out to Lord Granville: '. . . die deutschen Interessen an den ägyptischen Finanzen seien zu unserer eigenen Überraschung weit größer, als wir geglaubt hätten, sie bezifferten sich nach den neuesten Erhebungen auf mehr als 100 Millionen Mark'.⁹

Indeed, the Egyptian issue provided Bismarck with substantial leverage *vis-à-vis* Great Britain, much to the irritation of the British Foreign Office. If the German ambassador in London, Count Münster, had played the game strictly according to

⁶ For details see W. J. Mommsen, *Egypt and the Middle East in German Foreign Policy 1870-1914*, forthcoming.

⁷ J. Lepsius, A. Mendelsohn-Bartholdy, F. Thimme (eds.), *Die große Politik der Europäischen Kabinete, 1871-1914: Sammlung der diplomatischen Akten des*

Auswärtigen Amtes, 40 vols, Berlin 1922-7, vol. 2, pp. 153-4.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Herbert von Bismarck to Prince Bismarck, 16 June 1884, *Große Politik*, vol. 4, pp. 64-5.

Bismarck's intentions, instead of playing down the British-German differences as much as possible, the situation might have been even worse.¹⁰ In 1884 the disastrous state of Egyptian finances which had further deteriorated because of the costs of the military action against the Sudan—an imperialist operation undertaken very much against the wishes of Downing Street—made British policies largely dependent upon the good will of the other European powers, as the *Caisse de la Dette Publique* controlled about two thirds of the tax revenues of the country and had a statutory right to have the say in spending any surpluses which might occur.¹¹ In the event, the Egyptian issue provided the platform on which the German-French colonial *entente* was forged even though Jules Ferry was worried from the start that Bismarck intended to embroil France with Britain, only to leave it in the lurch in the end. It must be added that Imperial Germany's diplomatic position within the European system of powers had just received an additional boost. In February 1884 the Three Emperor's League between Russia, Austria-Hungary, and Imperial Germany had been renewed for another four years. This agreement was fundamentally a defensive one, but it forestalled, if only for the time being, the possibility of a Franco-Russian *rapprochement*, something that Bismarck was rightly concerned about. In addition, the danger of a conflict developing between Austria-Hungary and Russia over the future of the Balkans seemed to be minimized for the foreseeable future by this agreement, which emphasized the solidarity of the three conservative monarchies.

Undoubtedly, this treaty system was to some degree directed against the Western powers, notably Britain, in as much as Russia's long-standing aspirations to establish control over the Straits were given some encouragement, however guarded. The agreement between Imperial Germany and Czarist Russia stipulated, among other things, joint action in Ottoman affairs, and, given the international status of Egypt as a dependency of the Ottoman Empire, this obligation extended to Egyptian affairs as well; it is therefore not surprising that, much to the displeasure of the British government, Imperial Germany seconded Russian demands to be represented at the *Caisse de la Dette Publique*, however little this was justified in financial terms (as the Russian share of the debt administered by the *Caisse* was minimal). In addition, the Germans could count on some support from Austria-Hungary and Italy in Mediterranean affairs, and also to some degree in international affairs. Italy was tied to the Central Powers by the Triple Alliance, concluded in 1882, partly as a reaction to the French occupation of Tunisia one year earlier. The Triple Alliance provided some, albeit limited protection against possible French wrath about Italian colonial ventures in the Mediterranean.

This is to say that the political position of Imperial Germany and her allies within the European concert was by 1884 a comparatively strong one, partly because Bismarck's

¹⁰ The role of Münster has been discussed in a most controversial manner. Taylor and Crowe in particular expressed the opinion that Bismarck disagreed with Münster about his role at the London conference in June and July 1884 about Egypt only after the event. See, however, Bismarck's unequivocal statement of 12 Aug. 1884, *Große Politik*, vol. 4, p. 77. Bismarck was later at some pains to explain away to Courcel the unexpectedly soft attitude of Münster at the London conference. See Courcel to Ferry, 21 Sept. 1884, Gavin and Betley (eds.), *Scramble*, p. 339. Münster's personal attitude towards

colonial ventures was entirely negative: cf. *Große Politik*, vol. 4, p. 53. On the whole it would appear that Münster tended to present his instructions to his English partners in a watered-down version only.

¹¹ There is no detailed study of these conferences. However, see R. L. Tignor, *Modernisation and British Colonial Rule in Egypt, 1882-1914*, Princeton 1966, pp. 76 ff. For the difficulties of British policies in Egypt see also R. Robinson, J. Gallagher, A. Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism*, New York 1968, pp. 122 ff.

tactics of letting the other Powers get involved in controversial imperialist ventures in the Mediterranean and in Africa had paid off handsomely.

This may perhaps explain why Bismarck suddenly considered it acceptable to change gear, however reluctantly, in the field of colonial policies. It is well known that Bismarck had always objected to a German policy of actively acquiring colonies overseas, while nevertheless welcoming German commercial activities overseas on the basis of free trade. By 1883, however, Bismarck had begun to change his attitude in these matters, though perhaps not as radically as most historians who have dealt with the controversial issue of the motives behind his 'imperialism' are inclined to think.¹² He now became an adherent of a rather pragmatic version of 'free trade imperialism', which welcomed German economic activities in overseas countries, if only for domestic reasons. He no longer found it politically wise to refuse German commercial companies ^{operating overseas diplomatic support and, if need be, protection on behalf of the imperial government.} By this time German trade with various regions of Africa and other parts of the globe had developed to such a degree that it was no longer negligible, even though in absolute percentages of German foreign trade it was still minimal.¹³ Even so, Bismarck remained as determined as ever to engage the government as little as possible, and in particular to avoid any direct involvement in administering and developing such distant regions. This was to be undertaken entirely by the respective companies involved and on their account only. His attitude was, in fact, not very different from the British 'official mind' on this subject, and it was primarily to British examples that he looked for guidance and inspiration. Very much like the British liberal government of the day he eventually discovered the ideal solution to be chartered companies, like the East India Company, or, more recently, the North Borneo Company which had received its royal charter only in 1881. Bismarck was still reluctant to embark upon a policy of colonial expansion on any grander scale; yet by 1883 he had clearly come to the conclusion that the imperial government could no longer refuse support for colonial ventures undertaken by German nationals, provided that they seemed economically sound and viable. In the 1880s the German colonial movement was still in its infancy and the Reichstag parties were still reluctant to support direct state action in colonial affairs. The bulk of the Liberals of both persuasions, Progressives and National Liberals alike, were still in the grip of the traditional free trade ideology which opposed any government-directed colonial policies or even indirect support for colonial ventures by subsidies for shipping lines (as had been shown on the occasion of the *Dampfer-Subventionsvorlage* in 1882). But by this time it had become apparent that a policy of giving proper attention to colonial ventures would pay off handsomely in respect to domestic policies, and that they might even be helpful in bringing about a more co-operative Reichstag majority at the next election. Hans-Ulrich Wehler has put forward an elaborate theory according to which Bismarck was bound to satisfy a growing consensus among the ruling classes of Imperial Germany that expansion, be it economic or

¹² Cf. W. O. Aydelotte, *Bismarck and British Colonial Policy*, Philadelphia 1937; A. J. P. Taylor, *Germany's First Bid*; A. D. Turner, 'Bismarck's Imperialist Venture: Anti-British in Origin?', in P. Gifford and W. R. Louis (eds.), *Britain and Germany in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule*, New Haven 1967, pp. 47-82; H.-U. Wehler, *Bismarck und der Imperialismus*, 2nd edn., Cologne

1974; id., 'Bismarck's Imperialism 1862-1890', in *Past and Present*, 48 (1970), pp. 119-55; H. Pogge von Strandmann, 'The Domestic Origins of Germany's Colonial Expansion under Bismarck', in *Past and Present*, 42 (1969), pp. 140-50.

¹³ A good summary in J. D. Hargreaves, *Prelude to the Partition of West Africa*, London 1963, pp. 317 ff.

territorial, was necessary.¹⁴ Certainly, many people at that time assumed that the social order was threatened by periodic economic recession, mass unemployment, and the rise of the working classes. But it is perhaps going too far to explain Germany's thrust for a colonial policy in the 1880s simply as an act of social-imperialism, as great differences of opinion still existed as to the economic viability of an official colonial policy; its impact upon the economy, if any, was likely to be small, at least in the short run. But even so, by 1883 there were many reasons for cautiously backing the German colonialist movement, or, at any rate, such ventures as did not directly violate the established rights of the older empires, especially Britain and France. Indeed, on the whole, Bismarck was prepared to respect all the colonial possessions of other powers, large or small, if they could be considered properly established and were recognized in terms of international law.

Initially, however, there was considerable confusion in the German Foreign Office about how far the government should go in providing assistance or protection. It would appear that by the spring of 1883 Prince Bismarck himself was still undecided on this issue, apart from one point, namely that government involvement ought to be restricted to the absolute minimum.

The test case for German views on government action in colonial ventures came when a merchant from Bremen, F. A. E. Lüderitz, approached the German government first in November 1882, repeatedly thereafter, and definitely in August 1883, in order to be granted government protection for a commercial settlement at Angra Pequena. Bismarck was not prepared to antagonize Great Britain unnecessarily on such an issue. He therefore approached the British Foreign Office via his son Herbert von Bismarck, who was at the time acting ambassador in London, and formally enquired whether Great Britain exercised sovereignty in this region, or whether she intended to establish direct control there in the near future, adding explicitly, 'daß uns jetzt wie früher alle überseeischen Projekte und insbesondere jede Einmischung in vorhandene britische Interessen fernlägen, sowie daß wir es nur gern sehen würden, wenn England eventuell deutschen Ansiedlern in jenen Gegenden seinen wirksamen Schutz angedeihen lassen wollte'.¹⁵ Only if that were not the case would Imperial Germany provide the necessary protection itself.

This cautious diplomatic move opened what was to become a very serious rift in Anglo-German relations on colonial affairs. It confirms that at this stage Bismarck was still unreservedly in favour of the 'principles of informal empire'. What mattered in his view was that colonial ventures by German nationals overseas should be offered protection and not from which civilized power this protection originated. If the British would provide effective protection (and this included proper jurisdiction in the respective territory), so much the better. The British Foreign Office, and in particular the Colonial Office, which had to deal with this inquiry, assumed that Imperial Germany was still disinclined to establish colonial control itself, here or anywhere else, and thus did not consider the issue to be of great urgency; the matter was handled with great

¹⁴ For an assessment of Wehler's thesis (cf. above, n. 12), see W. J. Mommsen, 'Hans-Ulrich Wehler, Bismarck und der Imperialismus', in *Central European History*, 2 (1969), pp. 366-72; P. M. Kennedy, 'German Colonial Expansion: Has the "Manipulated Social

Imperialism" been Ante-Dated?', in *Past and Present*, 54 (1972), pp. 134-41.

¹⁵ On 7 Feb. 1883. Cf. Wehler, *Bismarck*, pp. 266-7. Compare the Eng. version, Herbert Bismarck to Pauncefote, 7 Feb. 1884, in Taylor, *Germany's First Bid*, p. 24.

delay, partly because it was considered necessary to consult the government of the Cape Colony, and because it was given no consideration at all on a higher governmental level. It would appear that initially the British government thought that it should abide by the German request and let Bismarck have a free hand in Angra Pequena. However, the Cape Colony, for its part, pressed very hard to keep the Germans out of South West Africa and demanded the declaration of an English Monroe Doctrine for this region.¹⁶ In the meantime, on 24 April 1881 the German government had confirmed that Lüderitz's venture should be placed under German protection. However, it carefully avoided claiming territorial control in the name of Imperial Germany itself, much to Lüderitz's chagrin. Thus, the British government prevaricated. In November 1883 the British government eventually responded to the German enquiry and, under pressure from the Cape Colony government, reversed an earlier decision, according to which Germany's request regarding Angra Pequena should be conceded. Now, it was decided that Great Britain should claim a protectorate on the African coast extending from the eighteenth degree of latitude to the border of the Cape Colony, 'although Her Majesty's Government have not proclaimed the Queen's sovereignty along the whole coast'.¹⁷ The British government thus identified itself with the South African position, which amounted to declaring a South African 'Monroe Doctrine' in this whole region. The consequences are well known. The German government was outraged and protested vehemently against this claim, which contradicted all the British government's earlier declarations. It was argued that the British step could not possibly be accepted, if only on the grounds that claims to sovereignty could be acknowledged only where they were exercised in actual fact. As a direct result of their violent clash, which led to the British government retreating on this particular issue, Imperial Germany significantly altered its position on colonial settlements of German nationals. It was now prepared to provide official protection to German nationals overseas 'wherever Great Britain does not exercise jurisdiction in actual fact and provides no protection for German nationals'. An official note of 31 December 1883 addressed to Lord Granville, however, remained without reply for the time being.¹⁸

Meanwhile the Germans decided to speed up the process of staking out colonial claims wherever possible, although they still did not intend to go beyond providing indirect backing for German colonial ventures whilst refraining from claiming sovereignty over the territories concerned. As early as 20 March 1884 Lüderitz was encouraged by the German Foreign Office to extend his territorial claims far beyond his original intentions. Moreover, at Bismarck's behest the government now invited the Chambers of Commerce in Bremen and Hamburg to stake out their claims in overseas regions, notably in West Africa, perhaps simply to get a precise picture of the actual economic interests involved. Undoubtedly Bismarck now meant business. It was further decided to send a special Imperial Commissioner, Dr Nachtigal, to West Africa

¹⁶ The role of the Cape Colony which pressed with great vigour for the declaration of an 'English' Monroe Doctrine in the region of South West Africa and Bechuanaland is now analysed in detail by D. M. Schreuder, *The Scramble for Southern Africa, 1877-1895*, Cambridge UP 1980, pp. 115-31.

¹⁷ Granville to Münster, 21 Nov. 1884. Cf. Taylor, *Germany's First Bid*, pp. 27-8 n. 2. The German version is

quoted by Wehler, *Bismarck*, p. 271. This document is important because the German reaction to this note, according to which Britain had taken 'formell nur Besitz von einzelnen Punkten', gave rise to the demand that this argument could only be sustained 'bei faktischer Ausübung', that is to say, effective occupation.

¹⁸ Wehler, *Bismarck*, p. 272.

to secure German territorial claims *vis-à-vis* those of its rival Britain in what was later to become the German Cameroons and Togo. The instructions given to Nachtigal were, however, still rather vague. He was supposed to collect information about the situation of German commercial firms on the spot; he was to ensure that by additional trade agreements with native chiefs the interests of German traders would be safeguarded against encroachments by rival parties; and, thirdly, he was to watch out for any British intentions to establish formal protectorates in this region. But on the other hand, the existing trading interests of other powers were to be respected. For the time being, at any rate, a formal engagement of Imperial Germany was not envisaged. It was only later that Bismarck was gradually driven beyond the line of indirect rule via German chartered companies, because the commercial firms involved refused to entertain any such proposals, even though the Chancellor himself pleaded with them to do so at a conference specially convened for the purpose. On 30 April 1884, as a result of the failure of these attempts, Dr Nachtigal was informed that 'in some West African coastal regions the protection of Germans and of their commercial transactions ought to be taken over directly by Imperial Germany'.¹⁹ It can be assumed, however, that Bismarck harboured hopes that such a step might still be avoided by hammering out adequate political agreements concerning West Africa with the other powers.

The sudden stepping up of German colonial activity was caused primarily by the belated, and allegedly hostile and preposterous reactions of Great Britain. It was made all the easier by the fact that the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty of 6 February 1884, which appeared to be another momentous case on the part of Great Britain of staking out mere paper protectorates using Portugal as a convenient proxy regime, had met with resistance from other powers as well, particularly France. Here again, Great Britain came forward with proposals which amounted to securing a large tract of territory in the name and by means of a proxy regime, although there could be no doubt that the latter did not exercise any effective control whatsoever anywhere.

The conflict on colonial policies emerging between Imperial Germany and Great Britain was partly a clash between two different conceptions of how state authority should be exercised overseas; *in nuce* Bismarck challenged the hitherto prevailing strategy of establishing imperial control merely by informal and indirect means, while direct government control of the respective territories was kept to a minimum. The very system which Bismarck himself had considered to be the only feasible one, that is, ruling through indigenous authorities or via private companies enjoying official protection, was now challenged by Imperial Germany. 'Paper protectorates' like the one claimed for the regions north and south of Walvis Bay, and which the British government had attempted to implement, were no longer considered tolerable. Neither could this be accepted in West Africa, as envisaged by the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty.²⁰ Effective occupation should henceforth be the criterion by which the territorial claims of other powers in overseas regions were to be judged.

Matters were hardly improved by Great Britain's somewhat hasty retreat on the issue of Angra Pequena in June 1884, as it was accompanied by a resolution of the Cape Colony's parliament that Bechuanaland and Walvis Bay should be formally annexed. The Germans saw in this another deliberate attempt to forestall any further

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 312.

²⁰ Cf. Bismarck to Münster, 5 May 1884, *Große Politik*, vol. 4, pp. 50-1.

territorial development of what, since 24 April 1884, had become the 'Protected Territory' of the *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft für Südwestafrika*. From this a full-scale confrontation between Imperial Germany and Great Britain developed on various colonial issues, from Angra Pequena to the Fiji Islands and Guinea, and, of course, also West Africa, which most recently had become the object of rival quests for direct or indirect territorial control by various parties, directly involving most of the major powers, that is France, Great Britain, Portugal, and Imperial Germany. Bismarck himself was outraged about the conduct of the British government in power and, undoubtedly over-reacting, believed that Britain was claiming a universal supremacy in colonial matters which ought to be checked by the joint endeavours of all continental seafaring nations!²¹

In fact, the British government did not necessarily harbour 'exclusive designs to establish sole rule, as far as possible, in all non-European seas'.²² However, the newcomers in the colonial race were seriously disturbing for Britain. The strategies of imperial rule practised by Britain, which preferred the techniques of informal and indirect rule, and protectorates over formal colonial administrations, had been on the whole very successful, not least because there had not yet been a great deal of competition from rival contenders. Now this state of affairs seemed to have come to an end. The widespread use of collaborationist regimes in semi-dependent territories to secure free access and favourable conditions for British commerce similarly began to run aground, while financial and political restraints would not always allow them to be replaced by more direct forms of imperial control.²³ Gladstone's government, ideologically bound to a policy of retrenchment at home and abroad, was perhaps least suited to solving these problems, which amounted to a far-reaching crisis of British imperial rule. In the cases of Angra Pequena and Guinea, a new phenomenon surfaced which was hard to come to terms with for the time being, namely the sub-imperialism of the dominions and the more advanced colonial dependencies; it proved difficult, if not impossible to control, while bound to increase friction in the international arena. While the other European powers did to some extent realize that these factors presented real problems for the British, they were not inclined to accept the British government's argument that it could not do anything about the attitudes of its dependencies. Hence, it is not only the ineptitude of the British administration then in power, but also the fact that the process of imperialist penetration of overseas territories was swiftly changing gear that explains the dilemma in which Gladstone and Granville found themselves. On the one hand the British government was under pressure from many quarters, both at home and in the Empire, to keep rival powers at bay as best as it could; on the other it lacked the political will and the financial and military resources to do just that.

The Anglo-Portuguese Treaty of 6 February 1884 must be seen in this light. It was an attempt to forestall any further French advances in the Congo region, while only indirectly engaging the British government without cost to the taxpayer. In effect it granted Portugal exclusive control of a region which, in recent years, had become the object of great expectations in many quarters. It was universally believed that the opening up of the Congo Basin would offer considerable commercial prospects in the

²¹ Cf. *Große Politik*, vol. 3, p. 414.

²² Ibid.: '... die exklusiven englischen Bestrebungen nach möglichster Alleinherrschaft in den außer-

europäischen Meeren'.

²³ Cf. also the contribution by J. E. Flint to this volume.

future. This treaty, however, was only a makeshift move, which did not please a large section of British merchants trading in West Africa, as Portugal's record in colonial affairs was a very negative one. France at once protested and other powers followed suit, not surprisingly including Imperial Germany. It was of no avail that the British abandoned the ratification of this agreement, which therefore remained a dead letter.

Prince Bismarck could not be expected to resist exploiting this situation, in which Great Britain found her policies challenged by the major European powers on several points simultaneously, notably in Egypt and West Africa. He offered the French government the chance to proceed in the West African question in concert with Germany; he also proffered Imperial Germany's assistance in Egyptian affairs. This amounted to a diplomatic offensive against Britain, which first was intended to make her isolation in overseas affairs manifestly visible to everyone, and second would force her to give way on the disputed colonial issues. However, paramount in his mind was the idea of driving a wedge between France and Great Britain. A colonial *entente* with France would, hopefully, have a beneficial effect on Franco-German relations in general. It is a matter of much dispute whether the intention to separate France from Britain was Bismarck's prime motive, or whether his imperialist venture was of independent origin. In our opinion the—temporary—conversion to what amounted to a moderate policy of colonial acquisitions overseas was genuine; it was in tune with the spirit of the early 1880s; the scramble for Africa was about to move into a higher gear; the German government did not want to run the risk of being blamed for having missed the right moment, however little Bismarck himself thought of colonies, formal or informal. It cannot, however, be overlooked that from the very start Bismarck made winning France for an *entente* on colonial issues his highest personal aim. The idea of convening a conference to decide on the future of West Africa, a region where France had much more to gain or to lose than Imperial Germany, was primarily a vehicle for bringing about this rapprochement. In the second place, it was meant to teach Britain a lesson and make her realize that she could no longer proceed in overseas matters without the connivance of the other European Powers. Seen in this light, the Conference was primarily a matter of European power politics. The material issues to be decided there, the establishing of certain international rules of colonial authority and colonial government, were absolutely secondary, and, as will have to be shown, this was increasingly the case as time progressed. Even if the Congo Act claimed otherwise, it treated Africa primarily as an object which could be used to pursue political objectives which had nothing at all to do with it, let alone with the African peoples. In a way it was an attempt to reduce Great Britain's hegemonial role in world affairs by internationalizing what was supposed to be one of the key regions of European commercial interests in Africa. However, it must not be overlooked that at the same time Bismarck envisaged that by establishing a free trade zone in West Africa, or at least in the Congo Basin, the legitimate interests of German trade in this region could be secured once and for all without direct government intervention, a solution which was fully in line with the Chancellor's general ideas about colonies and colonization.

Early in 1884 the chances of bringing about a reversal of the political affiliations within the European Concert of Powers seemed to be quite favourable. The French Cabinet under Jules Ferry was deeply antagonized by British policies in Egypt and was

determined to exert its influence in the *Administration de la Dette Publique* in order to restore French predominance in Egyptian affairs as far as possible to its former status. It was also prepared to use the legislative system of Egypt within which the Consular Courts enjoyed special privileges, in order to press for indemnity payments to Europeans whose property had been destroyed by the bombardment of Alexandria. Needless to say, the unhappy Egyptians were to pay these costs, not the British taxpayer! However, the London Conference on Egyptian affairs which ran from April to July 1884 ended in complete disagreement, even though Count Münster had not strictly adhered to his instructions. These were to support the French proposals for a reconstruction of the Debt Administration and to insist on adding to it a German as well as a Russian representative, instead of making a German representation dependent upon a Russian one, as Münster had suggested at the Conference, much to the irritation of Bismarck.²⁴

But all was not lost. Bismarck was prepared systematically to exploit the rift between Britain and France over the Egyptian question in order to get the French to join his plans for an international conference on West Africa. Just in case, Münster was instructed not to get the priorities of German foreign policy wrong again: 'Ich bitte . . . nicht zu vergessen, daß Ägypten als solches für uns ganz gleichgültig und für uns nur ein *Mittel* ist, den Widerstand Englands gegen unsere kolonialen Bestrebungen zu überwinden. Der kleinste Zipfel von Neu-Guinea oder Westafrika, wenn derselbe objektiv auch ganz wertlos sein mag, ist gegenwärtig für unsere Politik wichtiger als das gesamte Ägypten und seine Zukunft.'²⁵

The Egyptian question provided the opportunity for Bismarck to enter upon detailed negotiations with the French cabinet on political co-operation between France and Germany, as a necessary prerequisite for successfully opening up the Egyptian question again. At the same time they could agree on the agenda for a conference on the future of West Africa. In these talks Bismarck deviated from normal diplomatic procedure by conducting part of the negotiations personally and inviting the French ambassador in Berlin, Courcel, to his estate, Friedrichsruh. He even sent Ferry a personal letter in French, in which he summarized the main proposals for the agenda of the projected international conference.²⁶ The French government initially showed considerable reluctance to be pulled along what amounted to a warpath against Great Britain, or at least, a major diplomatic offensive. As late as October Jules Ferry observed: 'Bismarck's manifest tendency is to push us forward, promising to follow us; our policy is to wait and not take any step without the support of Europe.'²⁷ Eventually, however, the French went along with the Germans in the expectation that they might thereby secure substantial German support at the conference on Egyptian affairs scheduled for March 1885; there, with German assistance, they hoped to achieve a thorough internationalization of Egyptian affairs. This would force the British into retreat, or at any rate, into granting a predominant say in all financial matters to the representatives of the Egyptian Debt Administration in which it was to be hoped that the British would be hopelessly outnumbered. It need not be pointed out

²⁴ Compare n. 10 above.

²⁵ *Große Politik*, vol. 4, pp. 96-7.

²⁶ Bismarck to Ferry, through the hand of Courcel, 14 Sept. 1884, *Documents diplomatiques français, 1871-1914*,

1st series: 1871-1900, 16 vols., Paris 1929-59, vol. 5, p. 404 f. or Gavin and Betley, *Scramble*, p. 334.

²⁷ *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 421, p. 442.

that the welfare of the Egyptian populace in all this was considered to be only of secondary importance; it was primarily a matter of high politics, and the indebtedness of the poor country was merely a handy pawn in the hands of the Continental powers.

This being said, it becomes apparent that from the start Bismarck was the driving force behind endeavours to convene the West Africa Conference, although the idea for some sort of conference initially originated in Portugal. Undoubtedly, the original intention was to forge an anti-British coalition consisting not only of France and Imperial Germany, but of all the European colonizing powers. They were to draw up principles concerning the freedom of trade and effective occupation of all those territories not yet subjected to colonial rule, in analogy to the situation prevailing in the Far East. Bismarck assumed that Great Britain would probably refuse to join any such an agreement:

Kann Englands Beitritt herbeigeführt werden, so wäre dies erwünscht, für wahrscheinlich halte ich es kaum, glaube vielmehr, daß die exklusiven englischen Bestrebungen nach möglicher Alleinherrschaft in den außereuropäischen Meeren die anderen handeltreibenden Nationen in die Notwendigkeit setzen werden, durch Assoziation untereinander ein Gegengewicht gegen die englische Kolonialsuprematie herzustellen.²⁸

Similarly, Bismarck complained to Courcel as late as 23 September 1884, 'The English are led to believe that all parts of the terrestrial globe, which have not already been occupied by another nation, belong to them by virtue of a right of legal devolution, and to take up positions next to them on the fringes of free continents or on the seas, is to do them a wrong.' He demanded to have the European balance of power supplemented by a 'sort of equilibrium on the high seas . . .'.²⁹

At the same time, however, Bismarck wished to see what he regarded as the legitimate demands of the German business community satisfied as far as possible; that is, to get free access to economic opportunities overseas and fair treatment by those in authority. Much against his initial intentions, Bismarck saw himself being pushed beyond the position of a genuine 'free trade imperialism', largely by the activities of the British government and British agents at the periphery. He regarded them as engaging in sinister operations designed to forestall any further German colonial expansion at various points of the globe. None the less, Bismarck was still an opponent of straightforward colonial rule, and looked for solutions short of establishing formal colonial administrations under the German flag. He had very concrete reasons for doing so: 'Direct colonies we cannot administer, we can only support companies. Colonial administrations would be tantamount to enlarging the parliamentary parade ground,' he had noted earlier in the margin of one of the numerous reports about requests for direct government assistance.³⁰ His fundamental position on these matters had not changed even though he now conceded that the government could no longer sit still when challenged by the land-grabbing activities of rival powers.

Not least because he disliked being pushed into a policy of full-scale colonization, Bismarck was interested in halting the ongoing scramble for the control of territories overseas short of formal colonial rule, at least as far as German colonial ventures were

²⁸ *Große Politik*, vol. 3, p. 414.

²⁹ Courcel to Ferry, 23 Sept. 1884, Gavin and Betley, *Scramble* p. 341; *Ddf*, vol. 5, p. 424.

³⁰ 'Direkte Kolonien können wir nicht verwalten, nur

Kompagnien unterstützen. Kolonialverwaltungen wären nur Vergrößerung des parlamentarischen Exerzierplatzes.' Cf. also Wehler, *Bismarck*, pp. 438 ff.

concerned. His proposals for the Conference to be held as soon as possible—initially it was thought that it could be assembled as early as October 1884—amounted to a holding operation. He suggested that all territories not yet under the control of any of the Western powers should be given an international status which would guarantee the principles of free trade and free access to its markets for merchants of all nationalities alike. This would let off some of the steam in the struggle to establish formal territorial control in all those territories whose future was still in dispute among the powers.

In the case of the Cameroons Bismarck was driven by force of circumstance to go beyond his line of letting private business take the lead. Eventually, Dr Nachtigal was instructed to claim the Cameroons as a 'Protected Territory' on behalf of Imperial Germany. Bismarck even envisaged installing Dr Nachtigal as Consul-General. But, although the German flag was hoisted there early in August 1884, the use of the term sovereignty was carefully avoided for the time being. Bismarck himself undertook the task of inducing commercial interests to establish a 'Syndicate for West Africa' which, as he thought, should then be entrusted with the actual running of the 'Protectorate'. But the syndicate, which was formed somewhat reluctantly by the commercial firms involved in September 1884, steadfastly refused to take over any administrative duties whatsoever. Given this situation Imperial Germany was eventually pushed over the brink and forced to establish a direct colonial administration there. But there is little doubt that at this stage Bismarck worked hard to avoid just this; he hoped that agreements to be reached at the Conference might provide sufficient political guarantees for German commerce in the Cameroons which would allow formal control to be avoided or, at any rate, be limited to a minimum. There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of the assurance given to Courcel by the German Chancellor as late as 13 September 1884: 'The extension of our colonial possessions is not an object of our policies. We are interested only in securing access to Africa for German trade at those points which up to now are not subjected to the rule of other powers.'³¹ If German commerce's justified demands could be met by measures short of establishing 'Protected Territories', let alone formal colonies, so much the better. And he had reason to believe that this could be achieved at least in the Congo Basin, though undoubtedly he would have welcomed an extension of this principle far beyond this particular region of Africa. Given these premisses, the activities of Leopold II's *Association Internationale du Congo* (AIC) were sure to be welcomed. This association purported to be opening up to the West a huge, hitherto almost inaccessible territory on the basis of unrestricted freedom of trade to everybody. These efforts were bound to be greeted with enthusiasm, even though Bismarck must have been informed through his personal banker and intermediary, Bleichröder (whom he had used on various occasions to promote his *rapprochement* with France and who, incidentally, was to become the German representative at the *Caisse de la Dette Publique*), that Leopold's venture was neither financially nor morally on a very sound basis.³² The fact that the United States had identified itself with Leopold's venture at a relatively early stage, largely because he promised an 'open door' policy to American commerce also, was probably an additional factor.

³¹ Quoted by Königk, *Kongo-Konferenz*, p. 108.

³² For Bleichröder's role as a go-between for Leopold

II and Bismarck see also F. Stern, *Gold and Iron: Bleichröder and the Building of the German Empire*, London 1977, pp. 402-9.

Bismarck was not at all interested in carving out any more pieces of the West African cake for Imperial Germany, and, provided that German commerce would get fair treatment, preferred others to do the work of opening up these still largely unexplored territories. He was therefore inclined to let the AIC take as large a slice of West Africa as the French would tolerate.³³ Neither was he disinclined to attribute to this institution an independent legal status in international law,³⁴ or to grant it formal recognition as an independent state. Even if Leopold's enterprise were eventually to falter, and the right of pre-emption which had been conceded to France in April 1884 were to be acted upon, the international guarantees concerning free trade would none the less remain valid. Bismarck was not at all concerned about the territorial boundaries to be drawn up between the rival powers in West Africa, as long as they did not affect trade. During the Conference he once remarked tellingly: 'I only want free trade in the Congo, and I do not care which country claims sovereignty, provided that it guarantees this principle to me.'³⁵ One is surely justified in assuming that Bismarck was guided by considerations of this kind throughout. Perhaps it should be added that at the same time he was generally inclined to please France as far as possible in these matters. Undoubtedly this was also the case in this particular instance. Furthermore, Bismarck suggested the establishment of international commissions to regulate navigation on the Congo and Niger rivers. This would strengthen the principle of unrestricted access to these regions by commerce, irrespective of nationality, according to the model provided by the International Danube Commission set up in line with the resolutions of the Vienna Peace Congress of 1815. It is perhaps worth noting that Bismarck wished to give these commissions limited authority in matters of jurisdiction and administration in those border regions of these rivers where no established governmental authority existed. Instruments such as these could help to make the guarantee of free trade and open door in the Congo Basin more effective. It must be noted, however, that Bismarck envisaged this as an additional means of procuring an internationalization of commerce in this region, and he undoubtedly welcomed the engagement, however limited, in African affairs which the establishment of such commissions would have brought about for less directly affected powers like Czarist Russia and the Hapsburg Monarchy.

The last item on Bismarck's agenda for establishing international regulations was the suggestion that European colonial possessions in the Congo Basin be neutralized in the case of war. This suggestion was probably originally made by Leopold II rather

³³ Cf. J. Stengers, 'King Leopold and Anglo-French Rivalry', in P. Gifford and W. R. Louis (eds.), *France and Britain in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule*, New Haven 1971, pp. 121-66, here p. 163, referring to a report by Courcel about a conversation with Bismarck of 30 Aug. 1884. Cf. also Bismarck to Courcel, 13 Sept. 1884, quoted by Königk, *Kongo-Konferenz*, p. 108: 'Like France the German government will observe a beneficial attitude to the Belgian undertakings at the Congo, in accordance with the wish of both governments, to secure for their nationals freedom of trade in the whole territory of the future Congo State and also in those positions held by France at this river, and which should be subjected to the same liberal regime which is expected from the state to be founded anew. These advantages would be

maintained for the German nationals and guaranteed to them even in the case that France would find herself in the position to make use of the right of pre-emption which has been granted to her by the king of the Belgians, in case the acquisitions of the Congo Association were to be disposed of.'

³⁴ Münster to Granville, 2 Nov. 1884 (trans.): 'The Imperial government, however, holds that it is desirable in the interest of commerce and civilisation that the Association should be recognised as an international legal entity ('*Rechtssubject*'), Gavin and Betley, *Scramble*, p. 65.

³⁵ Statement at a dinner for the delegates to the Conference on 19 Jan. 1885. Quoted by Königk, *Kongo-Konferenz*, p. 172.

than by the Chancellor,³⁶ but it clearly suited his strategy also. Hence Imperial Germany, otherwise little inclined to argue the case of international disarmament, became an adherent of the principle of neutralizing the colonial possessions of the European powers in case of a war between them. Given Germany's comparative weakness as a sea power, this proposal was cutting in her favour. Besides Bismarck was still very concerned not to jeopardize Imperial Germany's position within the European concert by unduly emphasizing her role as a colonial power! The words with which Bismarck closed the proceedings of the West Africa Conference on 26 February 1885 undoubtedly correctly reflect his general approach to West African affairs: '... You have sought for the means to withdraw a great part of the African continent from the vicissitudes of general politics, and confine the rivalry of nations to the peaceful competition of trade and industry.'³⁷

Prince Bismarck's intentions as outlined on this occasion were certainly sincere; but in his view, the objective of bringing about an understanding with France which would have beneficial effects on Imperial Germany's position within the concert of Europe clearly had priority over the full and unrestricted implementation of his design for an internationalization of trade in the Congo Basin. In particular, Bismarck was keen to achieve full accord with France on all the major proposals before turning to the other powers, especially Great Britain. The French were sympathetic, but, they did not want to turn the Conference into 'a war machine against Britain'.³⁸ Besides, they found the principle of free trade neither altogether practical, nor altogether appealing, as they would stand to forfeit the advantages of a rather restrictive system of duties and tariffs in their own West African possessions without getting an adequate return elsewhere, even though Bismarck promised them free trade in, or rather, free commercial access to the two German 'Protected Territories' in the process of being established, Togo and the Cameroons. Neither were the French eager to support the introduction of an international river commission on the Niger as well, although this would possibly benefit French trade in the region, as it was likely to antagonize Great Britain.

Unlike the Germans, the French did not welcome the extension of these principles beyond the narrow confines of the Congo Basin itself. Consequently the principle of free trade was considerably watered down from the start. It lost some of its effectiveness, because the French wanted moderate taxation for expenses incurred to be allowed in order to promote trade and the period during which free trade was to apply in any case limited to a mere twenty years. As to the principle of effective occupation, they welcomed it inasmuch as it would put an end to British 'paper annexations' and the imposition of vague 'protectorates' of sorts. But they hesitated to press their point fully in the ensuing negotiations with the other powers, perhaps because they were well aware that some of their own recent acquisitions rested upon much the same shaky ground.³⁹ German diplomacy, eager to come to terms with the

³⁶ Cf. Leopold II's letter to Bleichröder of 4 May 1883, quoted by Stengers, 'King Leopold', p. 150.

³⁷ Gavin and Betley, *Scramble*, p. 284. For the French version see Ganslmeier, *Protocoles*, p. 375.

³⁸ Memorandum by Jules Ferry, Aug. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, pp. 377-80; Gavin and Betley, *Scramble*, pp. 328-30. Ibid., p. 330, Ferry sums up his analysis: 'Instead of making it [the projected conference] into a

war machine against England I should like to attract England into it, binding her to it by her own doctrines' (*Ddf*, vol. 5, p. 380).

³⁹ Cf. Ferry to Courcel, 19 Sept. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, pp. 415 f.; Gavin and Betley, *Scramble*, p. 338: 'The most delicate question no doubt will be that of determining the conditions which must exist before an occupation may be considered as effective. I believe, with M. de Bismarck,

French for reasons of general policy, did not seriously resist any of the French counter-proposals. Furthermore, it accepted from the start that none of these regulations should apply to territories which were already under the sovereignty of European powers. Consequently, long before the Conference actually got under way the German proposals were deprived of the potentially revolutionary effect which they might otherwise have had on conditions at the periphery. Bismarck's grand design to exempt the whole of the Congo Basin, and possibly also adjacent territories, from the immediate pressures of rival land-grabbing imperialisms, and to establish in the heartland of the Congo a proxy regime which would do the necessary policing while giving free access on equal terms to all commercial interests alike, therefore never properly got off the ground. This is partly due to the fact that Bismarck had designed the whole enterprise in the first place as an anti-British diplomatic offensive. Although British reactions to the joint German and French proposals were anything but forthcoming, it soon emerged that they were not quite as recalcitrant as Bismarck had thought they would be, even though the diplomatic language used by Bismarck's emissaries, including his son Herbert (who spoke fluent English and was well established in English high society) was at times rather rough.

Part of the story was that the British had every reason to accommodate the Germans wherever possible as their help was needed, or rather their potential role in the pending negotiations on the future of Egypt was feared. As the Gladstone-Granville correspondence shows, these considerations were paramount in their deliberations.⁴⁰ But in principle the British government had no objections to the introduction of an internationally guaranteed free trade system in West Africa, including the rival French and nascent German territories, let alone those of Portugal about whose handling of foreign commerce the British harboured serious doubts themselves. British views (or rather the views of Downing Street, as opposed to those of the Colonial Office, which was voicing the opinions of the affected British dependencies) did not in fact differ greatly from those of Bismarck, although he assumed the opposite to be the case. However, the British government was little inclined to accept an international river commission on the Lower Niger, given the fact that British public opinion regarded 'the Niger to all intents and purposes an English river'.⁴¹ But they conceded fairly early on that an international commission should be introduced in the Congo.

Bismarck had envisaged the issue of effective occupation as the main stumbling block to an understanding with Britain, and even as the main issue dividing Britain and the continental powers. In the event, it turned out not to be so much of a problem after all, partly because the German government failed to put forward a precise formula which was in line with reality at the periphery; the net of European jurisdictional authority was extremely thin almost everywhere, and usually did not extend beyond a few bridgeheads at the coast. This applied equally to colonial territories which were

that there is an advantage in proposing simply the principle, to leave to the projected conference the task of working out its application.'

⁴⁰ Cf. A. Ramm (ed.), *The Political Correspondence of Mr Gladstone and Lord Granville, 1876-1886*, 2 vols., Oxford 1962, vol. 2. The West Africa Conference and the diplomatic activities running up to it are hardly

mentioned in the correspondence, while the Egyptian problems are discussed almost day by day. On the whole, the tone of the correspondence concerning Bismarck and German colonial issues is rather condescending, to say the least.

⁴¹ Cf. W. R. Louis, 'The Berlin Congo Conference', in Gifford and Louis, *France and Britain*, pp. 167-220, 415.

already internationally accepted and to those still in the process of being carved out by means of more or less fictitious treaties of protection or purchase of rights and privileges from indigenous rulers. Bismarck eventually agreed to let the Conference itself find an adequate formula specifying when and under which conditions territorial occupation by any of the powers was deemed effective or not.⁴² Hence the British were partly spared what some officials in the Colonial Office feared would become a major problem for them: a scrutiny of the validity of their rather vague treaties with various African kings and chieftains. As a rule these treaties did not go beyond establishing the authority of a British consular official in exercising jurisdiction for British and possibly other European nationals in the respective territory, as well as guaranteeing British nationals the freedom to pursue commercial activities. In terms of established international law as practised by the concert of Europe these treaties would certainly not have met the preconditions necessary for an acknowledgement of the protecting power's sovereign rights in the respective region!

In the end this danger did not materialize. The cloth of legitimacy was not pulled away from under the feet of imperial authority in many West African territories as a consequence of the West Africa Conference. This was due partly to the fact that, although actual control had been established only at a few points, the German official's knowledge of colonial realities at the periphery was very slim indeed when the formula of effective occupation was first thought of. Actual control of the sort which would be considered as 'effective occupation' had been established only in a number of relatively small coastal regions. Almost everywhere imperialist penetration had proceeded in gradual, informal steps, and there were few, if any, legal precedents for the proper establishment of colonial authority. This made it extremely difficult to find a formula for 'effective occupation' which was adequate and would have withstood intense scrutiny by international lawyers. In the end the application of the principle of 'effective occupation' was restricted to the coastal regions anyway. Thus it lost entirely the little impact which it might have had otherwise, as there were almost no free territories on the West African coastline or anywhere else where it might have applied. Probably the eventual effect of Bismarck's proposals in this particular instance was the opposite of what he had intended, namely to accelerate the scramble rather than to halt paper annexations.

It has already been pointed out that Bismarck welcomed the AIC as a suitable proxy regime which would make it unnecessary for the major powers to step in themselves in order to provide the necessary protection for international trade. The British were far more sceptical on this point. They disliked the idea of granting the AIC international status, and the fact that France had been conceded the right of pre-emption made it all the more unattractive in British eyes. Given the diplomatic constellation, however, they had to put aside whatever reservations they harboured about the suitability of Leopold's enterprise.

Naturally the British resented the way in which the Conference proposals were presented to them jointly by France and Imperial Germany, but as the key propositions were largely in line with official British imperial policy they had little difficulty in accepting them. 'The Conference is too good a thing for us to be lost,' wrote Granville to Gladstone on 12 October 1884.⁴³ Therefore the British government somewhat grud-

⁴² Compare n. 39 above.

⁴³ Ramm, *Correspondence*, vol. 2, p. 278.

ingly agreed to accept the invitation, though only after having received a formal assurance that the regulations to be agreed by the Conference should not affect those territories already under actual British jurisdiction, that is, those in the region of the Lower Niger.

The isolation of Britain *vis-à-vis* the continental powers which Bismarck had envisaged in the early stages of the negotiations did not eventually materialize. On the contrary, during the Conference proceedings an Anglo-German *rapprochement* gradually came about, not unnaturally as both powers had the smallest real differences in West African affairs. Britain put up with the fact that Imperial Germany had entered the colonial arena and acknowledged the German 'Protected Territories'. At the second International Conference on Egyptian Affairs in March 1885 in London Imperial Germany in turn let the British get away with a settlement of the Egyptian debt which, though it was most burdensome for the Egyptians themselves, allowed Britain to stabilize its semi-colonial status in Egypt. Britain achieved this at the cost of an internationalization of the Egyptian debt problem which permitted both France and Imperial Germany to make life difficult for the British in this unfortunate country, whenever they wanted to, for many years to come. The attempt to create firm international guidelines for establishing and maintaining colonial rule in West Africa was, in the end, allowed to peter out. It had, after all, in part been merely a means of bringing about a major reversal in the European system of powers. Second, when it did not have the desired effect of producing a continental block against Britain and this did not seem so desirable any more anyway, it was no longer worth pushing hard for an effective implementation of the principles of free trade, effective occupation, and minimum standards of humanitarian colonial government. Not surprisingly Bismarck personally lost all interest in the proceedings right from the start of the Conference and he left the details to be handled by his representatives.⁴⁴

He had put across his main points. First, Great Britain had realized that it could no longer afford to neglect the demands of other European powers intent on establishing colonial possessions overseas. Second, Great Britain had grasped 'the idea that a Franco-German alliance is not an impossibility'.⁴⁵ Third, France had realized that there could be concrete co-operation with Imperial Germany, and that it was worth looking beyond a war of revenge to areas of possible mutual understanding between them. At the same time it had been demonstrated to both Russia and Austria-Hungary that whatever designs they might harbour either in the Balkans or *vis-à-vis* the Ottoman Empire, they should pursue them in co-operation with Imperial Germany, rather than without her connivance. While for a few months Africa had been on the point of moving into the centre of international politics, it was, if only for the time being, pushed back to the periphery again, and the European powers remained on the centre stage of international politics. Subjecting the scramble for territories in Africa and elsewhere to

⁴⁴ Cf. N. Rich, M. H. Fisher, and W. Frauendienst (eds.), *Die geheimen Papiere Friedrich von Holsteins*, 4 vols., Göttingen 1956-63, vol. 2: *Tagebuchblätter*, Göttingen 1957, p. 182, entry of 13 Dec. 1884: 'Eigentümlich ist die Haltung des Kanzlers bei der Konferenz. Die Sache langweilt ihn; sie war für ihn kaum mehr als ein Wahleffekt. Er folgt dem Gang der Verhandlungen nicht und gerät deshalb, wenn er mal mit dem französischen oder dem englischen Botschafter redet, in Widersprüche

mit seinen früheren Äußerungen, welche zur Folge haben, daß beide Teile ihm mehr und mehr mißtrauen . . . '.

⁴⁵ Cf. Bismarck to Courcel; cf. Courcel to Ferry, 23 Sept. 1884: 'she [i.e. Great Britain] must get used to the idea that a Franco-German alliance is not an impossible thing', *Ddf*, vol. 5, p. 424; Gavin and Betley, *Scramble*, p. 341.

the established rules of international law might have had a civilizing effect, however limited, on imperialist domination. But the slim chance of achieving this which had emerged on the eve of the Berlin West Africa Conference soon evaporated into nothingness again.

French African Priorities and the Berlin West Africa Conference

A. S. KANYA-FORSTNER

The Berlin West Africa Conference has often been described as a minor diplomatic triumph for Great Britain and thus a defeat for France. The product of French and German opposition to the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty, the Conference seemed clearly intended by its organizers to provide a forum for attacking British policies in tropical Africa. Once the delegates gathered in Berlin, however, the Germans quickly discovered that they had more in common with their British adversaries than with their supposed French partners. Helped by Britain, Bismarck secured a huge free trade zone stretching right across Central Africa from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean. Helped by Bismarck, the British successfully asserted their exclusive control over navigation along the Lower Niger. On the one issue where the two sides differed, the rules governing future occupations along the coast, it was British persistence which finally won the day. By contrast, the French soon found themselves at odds with Germany over the extent of the free trade zone and its neutrality in time of war. Far from attacking Britain, they had to fight a defensive action to keep Gabon out of the Congo's 'conventional' basin. Most seriously of all, they failed to break Britain's stranglehold on the Lower Niger, a humiliating defeat which effectively destroyed their colonial understanding with Germany. By the time the Conference was over, the French were almost totally isolated. Their only friends were the Portuguese, who were the biggest losers of all in 1885.¹

There is some merit in this interpretation, but its general validity can only be assessed within the broader context of French African priorities at the time. In tropical Africa, the principal objective was to unite French possessions into an immense commercial empire built on the supposedly limitless wealth of the interior. Though vague ambitions of this sort were by no means new, they began to take more concrete shape during the 1870s with the growth of interest in African railway-building. Modern transportation networks were seen as the key to unlocking the riches of the interior, and in 1879 Parliament was asked to vote funds for the study of a trans-Saharan railway to link Algeria with the Western Sudan. Maurice Rouvier, a future Minister of Commerce and Colonies, drafted the Budget Commission's report. France, he declared, 'ne peut pas dispenser de prendre sa part dans le mouvement qui entraine l'Europe vers les régions africaines dont on commence à entrevoir les richesses'. A few days' sail away lay a vast territory inhabited by 200 million people:

¹ This interpretation is developed most fully in: S. E. Crowe, *The Berlin West African Conference 1884-1885*, London 1942, esp. pp. 6, 95, 128; but see too R. Louis, 'The Berlin Congo Conference', in P. Gifford and

R. Louis (eds.), *France and Britain in Africa*, New Haven, Conn. 1971, pp. 167-220. For a more balanced assessment see J. D. Hargreaves, *Prelude to the Partition of West Africa*, London 1963, pp. 328-38.

'N'y a-t-il pas dans ces immenses régions un champs sans limite pour notre commerce, des ressources inépuisables et des débouchés inespérées pour notre industrie?'²

The government of the day was equally enthusiastic. The Minister of Public Works, Charles de Freycinet, had already set up a preliminary commission to study the trans-Saharan project, and in July 1879 he convened a full *Commission Supérieure*. The Sudanese interior was the richest part of Central Africa, he told the President of the Republic: 'La population y est évaluée par certains voyageurs à plus de cent million d'âmes. Un grand fleuve, le Niger, le traverse sur la moitié de son territoire. Les habitants sont laborieux et les éléments d'un trafic international paraissent y exister à un haut degré.' By December Freycinet, now Prime Minister, was talking of the government's duty 'de porter ses regards hors des frontières et d'examiner quelles conquêtes pacifiques il pourrait entreprendre . . . L'Afrique à nos portes attire plus particulièrement notre attention. Il faut essayer de rattacher les vastes territoires que baignent le Niger et le Congo.'³ Two months later the Minister of Marine and Colonies, Admiral Jean Jauréguiberry, submitted a hugely ambitious programme of West African railway-building to Parliament. The total cost of his project was estimated at 120 million francs. Two lines, from Dakar to Saint-Louis and from Saint-Louis to Medina on the Upper Senegal, were to be built by private enterprise. The third, from Medina to the Niger, was to be built by the state at a total cost of 54 million francs spread over six years. Jauréguiberry's railway also had a political purpose, to extend French domination to the Niger, and this objective was to be achieved by military means. In June 1880 the Minister transferred control over colonial construction to the *artillerie de marine*, and in September he appointed a *Commandant-Supérieur du Haut-Fleuve*, effectively placing the Senegal-Niger valley under military command.⁴

Nothing came of the trans-Saharan railway. Rebellion in Southern Algeria, the Tunisian crisis, and the massacre of the second Flatters expedition made it impossible to proceed until the Sahara had been occupied, and in June 1881 the project was indefinitely postponed. The Senegal-Niger railway also proved too much for Parliament to swallow at one gulp. But the Chambers did approve the construction of a line from Medina to Bafoulabé, a distance of some 135 kilometres, and by 1882 they had voted funds totalling 16 million francs for it. The military advance also continued. Jauréguiberry left office in September 1880; but he returned to the Ministry of Marine in February 1882, more determined than ever to 'donner une impulsion sérieuse à l'entreprise du Haut-Fleuve et toute l'extension possible à l'influence française . . . dans le bassin du Haut-Niger'. In August he authorized the *Commandant-Supérieur*, Gustave Borgnis-Desbordes, to occupy Bamako on the Upper Niger, which the latter did in February 1883. Even before Desbordes reached the Niger, Jauréguiberry ordered a gunboat to be assembled on the river—to be ready to sail down stream towards Timbuktu by January 1884.⁵

² Rouvier, Report, 10 June 1879, *Journal officiel de la République française* (JO hereafter), *Documents parlementaires*, *Chambre*, no. 1479, p. 6328. For the general context of French African policy in 1879-80, see A. S. Kanya-Forstner, *The Conquest of the Western Sudan: A Study in French Military Imperialism*, Cambridge 1969, pp. 60-7.

³ Freycinet, Report to the President of the Republic, 12 July, 31 Dec. 1879, JO, 14 July, 31 Dec. 1879,

pp. 6633-5, 11700.

⁴ Kanya-Forstner, *Conquest*, pp. 67-72.

⁵ Jauréguiberry to Governor of Senegal, 4 Apr. 1882, Archives Nationales, Section Outre-Mer (ANSOM hereafter) *Dossiers Administratifs*, Canard; Ministerial decision, 21 Aug. 1882; Dislère, Report to the Minister, 30 Sept. 1882, ANSOM Sénégal IV 77/a.

Fear of losing the race to the Niger was the reason for the minister's sense of urgency. The danger of British expansion inland from the Gambia and Sierra Leone had long preoccupied the Rue Royale. By 1881 Jauréguiberry, then out of office, was warning the Senate: 'Nous avons des rivaux, des rivaux acharnés, qui luttent constamment contre l'influence que nous exerçons déjà au Sénégal. Ils cherchent à nous contrarier par tous les moyens. Ils veulent arriver avant nous au Niger.' The occupation of Bamako was intended to avert this threat. The decision to place a gunboat on the river was based on similar considerations. 'Nous devons assurer les moyens de nous emparer immédiatement de cette artère commerciale, d'y montrer avant tout autre le pavillon français,' wrote the Director of Colonies. News that the British were moving upstream past the rapids at Bussa made it essential to act quickly: 'Il ne faut pas que le pavillon anglais se montre à Tombouctou avant le nôtre.'⁶

Before the 1880s French possessions elsewhere in West Africa received distinctly less attention. Throughout the 1870s indeed, French governments had been quite willing to give up all their rights between Senegal and Gabon in exchange for the British enclave along the Gambia, the most important route to the Upper Niger under British control. The Ministry of Marine was still in favour of such a deal in 1881, long after prospects for a territorial exchange had disappeared.⁷ By then, however, French traders had begun to show considerable interest in the Niger Delta. The *Compagnie Française de l'Afrique Equatoriale* (CFAE) had several trading posts on the Lower Niger, and in 1882 its agent-general, Captain Mattei, signed a commercial treaty with Loko on the Benué. C. A. Verminck, an important Marseilles merchant, had also begun to trade in the Delta through his recently formed *Compagnie du Sénégal et de la Côte Occidentale de l'Afrique*. Though the motives of the companies were primarily commercial, Mattei later described his mission as 'peut-être plus patriotique que commerciale: disputer aux Anglais . . . la neutralité des bouches du Niger et . . . les empêcher de s'emparer de toutes les vastes contrées du centre africain qui s'étendent depuis le Moyen Niger jusqu'au Tchad'.⁸

This too was the reason for the government's interest in the region. By 1883 the Ministries of Marine and Foreign Affairs had concluded that French interests along the West African coast were too important to be traded for the Gambia. On 25 January Jauréguiberry called on the Quai d'Orsay to ratify Mattei's treaty with Loko and to negotiate further treaties giving France unrestricted access to the Lower Niger, as well as political influence along the Benué. Though Jauréguiberry admitted that the British were too firmly established on the right bank of the Niger to be challenged there, commercial treaties on the left bank would give French traders 'une route indépendante des douanes anglaises', and political treaties along the Benué would give them 'la route de lac Tchad et des riches marchés de l'Adamawa et du Bornou'. To round out his policy, he then ordered the commandant of the South Atlantic Naval Division to negotiate treaties of protectorate in the eastern part of the Niger Delta.⁹

⁶ *JO, Débats parlementaires, Sénat*, 16 Feb. 1881, p. 107; Dislère, report to Minister, 30 Sept. 1882, ANSOM Sénégal IV 77/a.

⁷ Hargreaves, *Prelude*, pp. 178-81, 198-200, 249-50.

⁸ Mattei, *Bas-Niger, Bénoué, Dahomey*, Grenoble 1890, p. 2.

⁹ Ministre des Affaires Étrangères (MAE hereafter) to Ministre de la Marine et des Colonies (MMC hereafter),

20 Jan. 1883, Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Mémoires et Documents (AEMD hereafter) Afrique 84; MMC to MAE, 25 Jan. 1883, AEMD Afrique 86; Minute, cited in J. Stengers, 'L'Imperialisme coloniale de la fin du XIX^e siècle: mythe ou réalité', in *Journal of African History*, 3 (1962), pp. 469-91, p. 479.

Before the 1880s the French had shown little interest in Gabon either, and on more than one occasion the Quai d'Orsay had considered throwing it into a territorial exchange for the Gambia as well. Pierre de Brazza's first exploration of the Ogowe (1875-8) did have official backing, but only because the Minister of Marine at the time was a friend of the family and the young officer's patron. Brazza's second expedition in 1879 was undertaken on behalf of the French section of King Leopold's International African Association. The explorer had no official instructions, and his famous treaty of protectorate with Makoko of the Bateke, signed on 10 October 1880, was negotiated entirely on his own initiative. But Brazza had made no secret of his determination to 'planter le pavillon français sur les rives du Congo'.¹⁰ On his return to France in 1882, he mounted an extremely effective publicity campaign to obtain official support. By October *Le Temps* could report: 'Toute la presse française, avec une chaleur qu'on ne lui avait jamais vu apporter dans les questions coloniales, invite le gouvernement à ratifier le traité passé par M. de Brazza avec les riverains du Congo.'¹¹ Indeed, 'l'accueil fait par la presse aux résultats acquis par M. de Brazza et [le] mouvement d'opinion qui s'accroît en sa faveur' was a crucial reason why Prime Minister Duclerc submitted the Makoko treaty to Parliament in November.¹² Having ratified the treaty, Parliament also voted funds for another expedition, and in February 1883 Brazza was appointed *Commissaire du Gouvernement de la République* to lead it. His instructions, which he drafted himself, were to 'jeter les bases de notre établissement dans les régions assignées à votre action'. In the meantime, Commandant Cordier of the *Sagittaire* was ordered to take possession of a suitable route—possibly Niari-Kwilu—between Stanley Pool and the Atlantic coast north of the Congo's mouth.¹³

Here again, the prospect of tapping the wealth of the interior was the source of the Congo's new-found importance. The region, Brazza claimed in his reports to the ministry, was richer than the Western Sudan and easier to control because its inhabitants 'sont groupés sans cohésion nationale, ce qui faciliterait l'établissement de notre suprématie'. The British already dominated the Lower Niger, the natural outlet for the Benue. If they managed to bypass the rapids at Bussa, they could challenge France on the Upper Niger too: 'Il serait donc sage de ne pas compter trop exclusivement pour notre industrie en souffrance sur les débouchés du Soudan et de sauvegarder notre avenir dans le bassin du Congo dont l'étendue représente une cinquième de la superficie totale de l'Afrique.'¹⁴ This same vision helped to convince Parliament. By a coincidence, Maurice Rouvier reported on the Makoko treaty to the Chamber. He did so by repeating, almost word for word, the report on the trans-Saharan railway studies which he had submitted three years before. Xavier Blanc in the Senate was equally explicit:

Il existe en Afrique une vaste mer intérieure avec une étendue de côtes d'au moins 20.000 km et d'une population évaluée à 80 millions d'hommes . . . Mieux placée qu'aucune autre nation

¹⁰ H. Brunschwig, *Brazza explorateur: Les traités Makoko 1880-1882*, Paris 1972, p. 14. See too: H. Brunschwig, *L'Avènement de l'Afrique noire*, Paris 1963, pp. 137-49.

¹¹ *Le Temps*, 4 Oct. 1882, cited in Stengers, 'L'Impérialisme colonial', p. 474.

¹² Note for the Minister, 26 Sept. 1882, cited in Brunschwig, *Avènement*, p. 153.

¹³ Ministre de l'Instruction Publique to Brazza, Instructions, [14] Feb. 1883, MAE, *Documents*

diplomatiques: Affaires du Congo et de l'Afrique occidentale, Paris 1884, no. 4; MMC to Cordier, Instructions, 14 Jan. 1883, cited in C. Coquery-Vidrovitch, *Brazza et la prise de possession du Congo*, Paris 1969, pp. 226-8.

¹⁴ Brazza, Report to the Minister of Marine, Aug. 1882; Brazza, Report for the Under-Secretary of State, 28 Aug. 1882, cited in Brunschwig, *Brazza explorateur*, pp. 258-77.

pour pénétrer ces immenses et fertiles contrées, la France s'est déjà acheminée vers le Soudan par les deux grandes voies de l'Algérie et du Sénégal. Les découvertes de M. Savorgnan de Brazza lui ouvrent une nouvelle voie par le Bassin du Congo.¹⁵

As happened so often in the history of the French empire, grandiose programmes of expansion looked much better on the drawing-board than on the ground. The Senegal-Niger railway was the most expensive failure. By the end of 1883 less than twenty kilometres of track had actually been laid, and the minister had been forced to admit that the completion of the line to Bafoulabé would cost 24 million francs, twice the original estimate. The railway's spiralling costs and scandalous mismanagement soon disillusioned Parliament, and in 1884 work on it was halted. Hopes for reaching Timbuktu fared no better. The gunboat *Niger* was not assembled at Bamako until September 1884, only to prove unseaworthy. It took another year for it to be patched up and made ready to sail.¹⁶ In the meantime the Upper Niger remained vulnerable to a British advance. A boundary between Sierra Leone and the Rivières du Sud had been fixed in 1882. But the agreement was not ratified, and French officials continued to denounce British efforts to destroy their influence in the Western Sudan. 'Il est contestable,' the Under-Secretary for Colonies, Félix Faure, told the Governor of Senegal in March 1884, 'que nous n'avons cessé de rencontrer de la part de l'Angleterre, sur cette partie . . . d'Afrique comme sur tous les autres points du globe où nous exerçons une légitime influence, les marques d'un esprit d'envahissement des plus nuisibles à nos intérêts.'¹⁷

By 1884 the Ministry of Marine had lost much of its faith in the future of the Western Sudan. The military advance and the failure of railway-building had left the French precariously established along an extended line of forts which were extremely difficult to provision without an adequate system of transportation. There seemed little prospect of ever making the territory pay. 'Reste à savoir si, après avoir fait tous les sacrifices que demande le Gouverneur, nous recueillerons le fruit de nos dépenses,' the minister noted on a dispatch from Senegal: 'J'en doute fort.' Nor did the Under-Secretary for Colonies see much hope of keeping the British off the Upper Niger: 'Quels que soient nos droits antérieurs et notre vif désir de réserver la route commerciale du Niger, d'ouvrir à notre commerce un débouché vers le Soudan, nous ne pouvons avoir la prétention d'empêcher les Anglais de se frayer une autre voie vers le même but. C'est une concurrence inévitable qu'il nous faudra subir . . .'¹⁸ The solution to the problem which Faure began to consider was to open the whole of the Niger to the trade of both countries. Though he appreciated the difficulties involved, he nevertheless called on the Quai d'Orsay to begin negotiations with London for the neutralization of the Lower Niger and a guarantee of equal treatment for French trade there.¹⁹

Unfortunately, by 1884 the French position on the Lower Niger was much more precarious still. Although Mattei had been given treaty-making powers in March 1883, he was unable to mount an effective challenge to the British and failed to sign an

¹⁵ Rouvier, Report, 22 Nov. 1882, cited in Brunschwig, *Avènement*, p. 162; Xavier Blanc, Report, *JO, Déb. parl. Sénat*, 28 Nov. 1882, pp. 1089-91.

¹⁶ Kanya-Forstner, *Conquest*, pp. 110-17, 120-1.

¹⁷ Faure to Governor of Senegal, Instructions, 31 Mar. 1884, ANSOM Sénégal I 71/a.

¹⁸ Minute by Peyron on Governor of Senegal to MMC, 9 Nov. 1883, ANSOM Sénégal I 70/a; Reply to the report of Dureau de Vaulcomte, n.d. (after February 1884), ANSOM Afrique VI 38/a.

¹⁹ Faure to MAE, 12 Feb. 1884, AEMD Afrique 86.

agreement with the chiefs of Brass River. Nor did the gunboat *Voltigeur* have any more luck further east. The French pinpricks merely goaded the British into action. After months of hesitation, Consul Hewett finally set out on his famous treaty-making expedition in May 1884 and consolidated British supremacy along the coast. Meanwhile, Goldie and his National African Company launched a ruthless price war to drive the French companies off the Niger. Neither the CFAE nor the *Compagnie du Sénégal* could match the NAC's financial resources, and neither could survive the competition without official support.²⁰

This support was not forthcoming. The Quai d'Orsay had never been confident about supplanting Britain on the Lower Niger, and it gave Mattei only a token sum of 3,000 francs with which to buy presents for the local chiefs. When Mattei's efforts failed to produce results, he was ordered to abandon his political activities and concentrate instead on securing freedom of access for French trade.²¹ The Foreign Ministry did not think much of Faure's proposal to negotiate with the British either. A neutralization of the Lower Niger would have to be paid for, and French interests there were hardly important enough to justify 'les sacrifices auxquels nous pourrions ainsi nous voir entraînés'.²² Accordingly, Mattei's increasingly desperate appeals for help were ignored and nothing was done to save the companies, both of which had sold out to Goldie by October 1884.²³

If the Quai d'Orsay had little use for the Lower Niger, the Rue Royale had even less for the Congo. Jauréguiberry had never liked or trusted Brazza, and his support for the Makoko treaty was, to say the least, lukewarm. The minister's draft instructions to Cordier also ruled out any 'prise de possession effective . . . tant que nos intérêts ne seront pas directement menacés'; the orders were changed only at Duclerc's insistence. Even then, Jauréguiberry reminded the captain of the *Sagittaire* that 'la question du Congo, qui grossira démesurément à vos yeux dans le milieu éloigné où vous serez appelé à vivre, n'est pas la seule importante pour notre pays. L'obligation où vous savez que nous sommes de concentrer nos efforts sur d'autres points . . . vous indiquer [a] les sages limites que vous ne devez pas dépasser dans un pays où, jusqu'ici, nos intérêts sont relativement faibles.'²⁴

Through the combined efforts of Brazza and Cordier, the French did establish a presence in the Congo region. By 1884 they had a dozen posts there, including three in the area of the Kwilu. Here too, however, the French encountered determined opposition. Having tried and failed to prevent the ratification of the Makoko treaty, Leopold of the Belgians launched a subtle and very successful campaign to place his Congolese enterprises on a sound political footing. In October 1882 he coined a new title for his organization, the *Association Internationale du Congo*, and ordered Stanley to stake out as many political claims as possible. By 1884 Stanley's agents had set up a chain of trading stations on the Kwilu and Niari, along the route for Brazzaville to the sea. In the meantime, the king negotiated with the French.²⁵ Jules Ferry, the French

²⁰ The most convenient account is Hargreaves, *Prelude*, pp. 310-15.

²¹ MAE to MMC, 25 June 1883; MAE to Mattei, 22 Nov. 1883, AEMD Afrique 86.

²² MAE to MMC, 11 June 1884, *ibid.*

²³ Mattei to MAE, 6 May, 13 Oct. 1884; MAE to Mattei, 17 Mar. 1885, *ibid.*

²⁴ Brunschwig, *Avènement*, pp. 149-56, 163-5; MMC to Cordier, Instructions, 14 Jan. 1883, cited in Coquery, *Prise de possession*, pp. 226-8.

²⁵ The best account of Leopold's policies is J. Stengers, 'King Leopold and Anglo-French Rivalry, 1882-1884', in Gifford and Louis, *France and Britain in Africa*, pp. 121-66.

Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, was particularly worried about the possibility that the AIC would go bankrupt and sell out to a third party, specifically Great Britain. As he later told the German ambassador, 'nous ne pouvons pas admettre qu'après les résultats obtenus par M. de Brazza, dont vous connaissez la popularité, les Anglais se supplantent à nous sur le Congo'.²⁶ Accordingly, he demanded and received a guarantee that the trading stations would never be sold without French consent. Leopold then went one step further and offered France a right of pre-emption should the AIC ever be forced to liquidate its holdings, an offer which Ferry accepted. The agreement of April 1884 fell short of the formal recognition which Leopold had just obtained from the United States, but it did commit France to 'respecter les stations et territoires libres de l'Association et de ne pas mettre obstacle à l'exercice de ses droits'.²⁷

French activities in the Congo also alarmed the British. To keep the mouth of the Congo out of French hands, they negotiated their abortive treaty with Portugal, a blunder all the more egregious as there was no French challenge to repel. Paris had no intention of encroaching into the Portuguese sphere, and Cordier's instructions had expressly forbidden him to take any action south of 5° 12' S, the limit of Portugal's traditional claims of sovereignty along the coast.²⁸ But Ferry was not about to accept a treaty whose negotiation he considered a deliberate snub to France, as well as an attempt 'to raise difficulties with M. Brazza's expedition'.²⁹ He voiced his objections to the Anglo-Portuguese agreement as soon as he learned of its terms, and at the end of March he suggested that the German government oppose it as well.³⁰ Ironically, the most significant result of Britain's inept diplomacy was to provide an issue on which France and Germany could unite in attacking her, and so to give Bismarck the pretext for launching his colonial flirtation with France.

The motives behind Bismarck's complicated diplomacy in 1884-5 are beyond the scope of this paper. What does concern us here is the French reaction to his overtures for an anti-British colonial *entente*. Bismarck began to reveal his plans during conversations with the French ambassador, Alphonse de Courcel, at the end of April. He castigated the Gladstone government in especially violent terms, spoke of a common Franco-German interest in Egypt, and hinted vaguely at the formation of an *entente des neutres* directed against Britain. He also assured Courcel that Consul Nachtigal's current round of treaty-making in West Africa was in no way directed

²⁶ Hohenlohe to Bismarck, 18 May 1884, cited in: R. S. Thomson, *Fondation de l'État Indépendent du Congo: Un chapitre de l'histoire du partage de l'Afrique*, Brussels 1933, p. 164.

²⁷ Strauch to Ferry, 23 Aug. 1884; Ferry to Strauch, 24 Apr. 1884, *Affaires du Congo*, nos. 17, 18.

²⁸ The French did have some hopes, based in part on conversations between Brazza and the Portuguese ambassador in 1880, that Portugal would be prepared to cede the north bank of the Congo in return for French recognition of her claims to the south bank. The French made some unofficial soundings about such a possibility in November 1883, but no official negotiations took place. In fact, there was never any prospect that Portugal would cede the north bank of the Congo to France, not least because the French had nothing to offer in exchange

except 'une reconnaissance platonique' of Portugal's rights to the south bank of the Congo. For a fuller discussion of this episode, see F. Latour da Veiga Pinto, *Le Portugal et le Congo au XIX^e siècle*, Paris 1972, pp. 150-4, 171-2, 178-83, 212-16.

²⁹ Granville to Petre, 6 Aug. 1884, Correspondence Respecting the Proposed West Africa Conference, Foreign Office Confidential Print (FOCP hereafter) 5023, no. 9. See too: Ferry to Waddington, 7 Mar. 1884, Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Papiers d'Agents (AEPA hereafter) Waddington 4: 'On règle toutes choses à notre barbe, comme si nous n'existons pas.'

³⁰ Ferry to Laboulaye (with enclosure), 14 Mar. 1884, *Affaires du Congo*, no. 14; Ferry to Courcel, 31 Mar. 1884, *Def.* 1st series, 1871-1900, 16 vols., Paris 1929-59, vol. 5, no. 226.

against France and suggested an understanding of rules to be observed when taking possession of unclaimed territory in Africa.³¹ Meanwhile his Foreign Minister, Count Hatzfeldt, raised the possibility of a common stand on the question of the Congo.³² Ferry did not reject the idea of limited Franco-German co-operation in tropical Africa. Both he and his ambassador were anxious to 'substituer, dans les rapports entre la France et l'Allemagne, la politique d'intérêts communs à la politique de sentiments et de ressentiments'.³³ But both looked on the German overtures with the gravest suspicion. According to Courcel, offers of German support in the colonial sphere were intended to divert French attention from Europe and to intensify Anglo-French antagonism. According to Ferry, Bismarck's hints of German support over Egypt really meant: 'Je ne veux rien faire pour contrarier l'Angleterre; mais je serais enchanté de la voir contrariée par d'autres, par vous surtout.'³⁴ Before responding to Bismarck's initiative, therefore, the Prime Minister wanted to see how the Germans would behave at the forthcoming conference on Egyptian finances.³⁵

For all the heat which Anglo-French rivalry in West Africa occasionally generated, by far the most important issue separating Britain and France after 1882 was Egypt. The French had never accepted the British occupation and remained unalterably committed to ending it. 'La résistance aux ambitions anglaises' in Egypt was first on the list of their African priorities, 'la considération qui domine toutes les autres'. But the French had come a long way since Duclerc had rather pathetically asserted their 'liberté d'action' in 1883. As far as Ferry was concerned, the old Dual Control was dead and buried, and his Egyptian policy would henceforth be 'international'.³⁶ He was also prepared to compromise, as indeed were the British. The preliminary agreement embodied in an exchange of Notes between the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Granville, and the French ambassador in London, W. H. Waddington, seemed to resolve the political aspect of the Egyptian problem. The French formally declared that 'le condominium est mort, et nous n'entendons pas le ressusciter'. They undertook not to reoccupy Egypt after a British evacuation except with British consent, and they agreed that the international debt commission should have a permanent British president, in return for an extension of its powers. For their part, the British undertook to evacuate Egypt by 1 January 1888 if the powers agreed that withdrawal would not endanger the country's security. They also undertook to guarantee freedom of passage through the Suez Canal, in time of war as well as peace, and to draft proposals for neutralizing Egypt along Belgian lines.³⁷ Had these terms been implemented, the 'Egyptian Question' itself would effectively have disappeared.

Unfortunately, the Anglo-French agreement of June 1884 was conditional upon a resolution of Egypt's financial crisis. It was clear to everyone that the British would

³¹ Courcel to Ferry, 24, 25 Apr., 14 May 1884, *ibid.*, nos. 246, 249, 270.

³² Courcel to Ferry, 26 Apr. 1884, *Affaires du Congo*, no. 20.

³³ Courcel to Ferry, 17 Aug. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 372; Ferry to his wife, 18 Aug. 1884, cited in L. Y. Rathnam, 'Jules Ferry and the Politics of the Tonkin Question', unpublished D.Phil. thesis, Oxford 1976, p. 313: 'A moins de poser en principe que l'idéal de la politique française est d'être brouillé avec l'Allemagne en temps de paix, il faut bien entrer en rapport avec elle, et il

est utile d'avoir avec elle des ententes sur le terrain des intérêts communs.'

³⁴ Courcel to Ferry, 20, 25 Apr. 1884; Ferry, Note, March 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, nos. 243, 247, 227.

³⁵ Thomson, *Fondation*, pp. 202-6.

³⁶ Ferry to Barrère, 9 Jan. 1884; Ferry to Decrais, 17 Apr. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, nos. 186, 239; Ferry to Waddington, 7 Mar. 1884, AEPA Waddington 4.

³⁷ Waddington to Granville, 15 June; Granville to Waddington, 16 June; Waddington to Granville, 17 June 1884, MAE, *Ddf*, Affaires d'Egypte 1884, nos. 3, 4, 5.

insist on some reduction of the interest on the Egyptian debt, a notion which brought predictable cries of outrage from the French bondholders and their supporters in the press and Parliament. Fear of parliamentary opposition to his Egyptian policy had haunted Ferry throughout the talks with Granville. 'Nous ne sommes pas plus que le cabinet anglais irresponsables devant l'opinion,' he warned Waddington in May, 'et si nous sacrifions sans les plus graves, les plus éclatantes raisons l'intérêt des créanciers, nous perdrons le fruit de notre bonne volonté.'³⁸ Mindful of 'le vieux et inépuisable levain d'anglophobie qui va au fond de l'opinion publique', the Prime Minister felt obliged to assure the Chamber that no prior financial agreement had been reached and that his government would stand firm on the question of interest rates.³⁹ Since Parliament would have to approve any financial settlement, Waddington was instructed not to forget 'la part relativement considérable que les capitaux français représentent dans la dette égyptienne et les motifs que nous avons à les mettre à couvert contre tout nouveau sacrifice dont l'impérieuse nécessité ne serait pas absolument établie'.⁴⁰

The London Conference which opened on 28 June was thus doomed from the start. Granville repeatedly stressed 'que le Parlement anglais ne votera pas d'arrangement sans la réduction de l'intérêt de la dette'. The French for their part were equally insistent 'que l'opinion de la Chambre et du public français nous interdisait absolument de sanctionner une réduction du taux de l'intérêt'; 'qu'il n'y avait aucune transaction possible, l'opinion publique chez nous y étant absolument opposée'.⁴¹ The Quai d'Orsay was persuaded by its financial experts that a reduction in the interest rate was also unnecessary, and British insistence on the point merely added to Ferry's mounting irritation.⁴² For reasons of prestige, even the Anglophile Waddington was convinced of the need to stand firm: 'Les Ambassadeurs ici paraissent attendre pour voir qui, des Anglais ou de nous, cédera sur ce point.'⁴³ The counter-proposals which Waddington submitted on 23 July were rejected by Granville as unacceptable to the British government. Modified British proposals proved equally unacceptable to the French, and the Conference broke up in confusion on 2 August. Waddington at least appreciated the reasons for the débâcle:

L'échec de la Conférence est du à l'antagonisme qui existe entre les intérêts politiques de la France en Egypte que lui conseillent une entente avec l'Angleterre et les intérêts financiers qu'elle a à défendre. Cet antagonisme persiste, et il faut toujours compter que la résistance des intéressés à toute réduction du coupon se manifesterà à la première occasion avec une grande vivacité.⁴⁴

³⁸ Ferry to Waddington, 4 May 1884, AEPA Waddington 4. This too was the reason for Ferry's initial opposition to a permanent British president of the *Caisse de la Dette*. Ferry to Waddington, 31 May 1884, *ibid.*: 'Je sais bien que le cabinet anglais voit là-dedans une satisfaction d'amour-propre, un élément de prestige pour les bavards. Mais s'il a son Parlement, nous avons le nôtre. La reconnaissance d'une situation de supériorité dans un comité d'égaux au profit de l'Angleterre éveillera en France les plus dangereux sentiments.'

³⁹ Ferry to Waddington, 26 June 1884, *ibid.*; *JO Déb. parl. Chambre*, 23, 26 June 1884, pp. 1453-6, 1487-1505.

Ferry was not entirely displeased by the parliamentary reaction, hoping that it would strengthen Waddington's hand in the negotiations.

⁴⁰ Ferry to Waddington, 27 June 1884, AE Angleterre 805.

⁴¹ Waddington to Ferry, 15, 17, 18 July 1884, *ibid.*

⁴² Ferry to Waddington, 17, 21, July 1884, *ibid.* Ferry described the British insistence as 'un objet de stupéfaction'.

⁴³ Waddington to Ferry, 17 July 1884, *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Waddington, Note for the Minister, 23 Dec. 1884, AEPA Waddington 8.

The failure of the London Conference raised Bismarck's hopes that the French would now be more amenable to a colonial *entente*, and he quickly resumed his courtship. But the French proved no easier to win. Any lasting *rapprochement* with Germany, Courcel told Hatzfeldt in August, would have to be clearly advantageous to France, and the necessary advantages could only be had over Egypt. But Count Münster's behaviour in London had done little to convince Ferry that Bismarck's intentions were honourable, and he refused to take any new initiative on the Egyptian question, despite assurances of German support.⁴⁵ As Courcel explained to Hatzfeldt, the risks of an open breach with Britain were unacceptable 'puisque nous étions isolés et que même l'appui de l'Allemagne et de ses alliées serait impuissant à nous garantir contre les difficultés que l'Angleterre se trouvait en mesure de nous susciter dans toutes les parties du monde si elle était animée des dispositions véritablement hostiles à notre égard.'⁴⁶

Ferry was scarcely more enthusiastic about more limited co-operation in West Africa. To be acceptable to public opinion, an agreement would have to be restricted to specific points of common interest and avoid any appearance of a broader understanding. It would also have to avoid any impression that 'nous donnons tout et ne recevons rien'.⁴⁷ The Prime Minister could join with Germany in summoning an international conference to establish freedom of trade and navigation along the Congo and the principles to govern future occupations along the African coast. He also wanted freedom of navigation extended to the Niger, 'wo sonst die Errichtung englischer Barrieren in naher Zukunft zu befürchten sei'. But she had no intention of turning the conference into 'une machine à guerre contre l'Angleterre'.⁴⁸ Even Bismarck's suggestion to hold the conference in Paris was rejected. As Courcel pointed out, it simply reflected the Chancellor's desire 'de nous placer en première ligne dans l'attaque contre l'Angleterre, afin de nous compromettre définitivement'.⁴⁹

The terms of the Franco-German *entente* were thus very limited in scope. Germany promised not to press any claims on the West African coast which conflicted with

⁴⁵ Bismarck to Hatzfeldt, 7 Aug.; Hatzfeldt to Bismarck, 11 Aug.; Hohenlohe to Bismarck, 15 Aug.; Hatzfeldt to Bismarck, 17 Aug. 1884, J. Lepsius, A. Mendelsohn-Bartholdy, F. Thimme (eds.), *Die große Politik der europäischen Kabinette, 1871-1914: Sammlung der Diplomatischen Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes*, 40 vols., Berlin 1922-7, vol. 3, nos. 680, 681, 684, 685; Courcel to Ferry, 7, 11, 15, 16, 17 Aug. 1884, AE Allemagne 58, Ddf, vol. 5, nos. 361, 366, 369, 372; Raindre to Ferry, 20 Aug. 1884, AE Allemagne 58. At the London Conference on 28 July, Münster had declared his neutrality in the dispute between Britain and France since the two parties could agree neither upon the facts nor upon general principles. He also refused to take the lead in demanding the addition of a German and a Russian representative to the *Caisse*. Ferry later blamed his attitude for the failure of the Conference, and Bismarck himself rebuked the ambassador for not following his instructions. Waddington to Ferry, 28 July 1884, AE Angleterre 805; Ferry to Courcel, 8 Sept. 1884, Ddf, vol. 5, no. 391; Bismarck to Münster, 12 Aug. 1884, *Große Politik*, vol. 4, no. 749.

⁴⁶ Courcel to Ferry, 17 Aug. 1884, Ddf, vol. 5, no. 372.

⁴⁷ Ferry was particularly concerned about granting freedom for German trade in those areas of the Congo which had been opened up at French expense. To counter parliamentary opposition, he asked first for a revision of the most favoured nation clauses of the Treaty of Frankfurt, a hopelessly unrealistic demand. He then tried to secure freedom for French trade in the Cameroons, but refused to give a similar guarantee for German trade along the Ogowe. He eventually had to settle for a general statement that French concessions were subject to the principle of reciprocity. Ferry, Note [22-4 Aug. 1884]; Courcel to Ferry, 30 Aug. 1884, Ddf, vol. 5, nos. 376, 385; Ferry to Courcel, 20 Sept.; Courcel to Billot, 21 Sept.; Ferry to Billot (for Courcel), 22 Sept.; Courcel to Ferry, 24, 29 Sept. 1884, AE Allemagne 58.

⁴⁸ Ferry, Note [22-4 Aug. 1884]; Courcel to Ferry, 25-6 Aug. 1884, Ddf, vol. 5, nos. 276, 377; Hatzfeldt to Bismarck, 25 Aug. 1884, *Große Politik*, vol. 3, no. 687.

⁴⁹ Courcel to Ferry, 15 Sept. 1884, *Documents diplomatiques*, vol. 5, no. 399.

existing French rights. France guaranteed, 'à la condition de la réciprocité', freedom for German trade in the Congo, including the territories of the AIC if ever she exercised her right of pre-emption. The two sides agreed to summon a conference for the purpose of establishing free trade in the Congo Basin, but the French excluded Senegal, Guinea, and Gabon from the terms of their commitment. The conference was also to establish an internationally supervised system of free navigation along the Congo and the Niger, and to define the formalities which would have to be observed before future acquisitions along the African coast could be considered effective. But the French made no commitment to support freedom of trade (as opposed to navigation) along the Niger, and the formalities of effective occupation were not defined beforehand.⁵⁰ In his instructions to the French delegates, Ferry ordered them to avoid any discussion of territorial claims and, as far as possible, any opposition to the legitimate claims of a third party. They could act in concert with Germany on issues of mutual interest, but such action was not to be given the appearance of 'une démonstration dirigée contre d'autres puissances ou [de] l'inauguration d'un nouveau système politique'. Indeed, within the limits of the agreement with Germany, the delegates were to press the French point of view as forcefully as possible.⁵¹

By the time the Berlin West Africa Conference convened in November, Bismarck was no longer talking about a Franco-German *rapprochement*. Instead, he was complaining bitterly both about Ferry's lack of confidence in his intentions and about France's 'appétit territorial' in tropical Africa.⁵² On the other hand, Ferry and Courcel remained convinced that Bismarck's objective was to 'nous faire oublier l'Alsace et nous détacher définitivement, irrémédiablement de l'Angleterre'. But no Frenchman could ever forget the Lost Provinces, and Ferry had no intention of breaking completely with Great Britain. Because of her interests in Egypt, Courcel warned Bismarck at the end of the month, France had to remain on good terms with the occupying power, whoever it might be: 'Si c'est l'Angleterre, nous devons nécessairement nous accorder avec elle, à quelques conditions que ce soit.'⁵³ Though Courcel still held out the prospect of a more solid Franco-German *entente* based on a common Egyptian policy, Bismarck did not consider it very likely. 'Eh bien', he told the ambassador, 'je continuerai à faire ma cour à la Dame capricieuse, mais je n'ai pas beaucoup d'espoir.'⁵⁴

How well did the French do at Berlin? As far as the Congo was concerned, the results were satisfactory enough. Though committed to freedom of trade in the Congo Basin, the French were not free traders at heart, and they were anxious lest the principle be extended to the Ogowe. A majority of the powers at the Conference, however, wanted the Basin to be defined in the broadest possible terms. Fixing the boundaries of the free trade zone caused a great deal of friction between the French and German delegates, but a deal was eventually struck. In return for an extension of the 'Conventional Basin' eastward to the Indian Ocean, Germany supported French

⁵⁰ Bismarck to Courcel, 13 Sept. 1884; Ferry to Courcel, 19 Sept. 1884, *ibid.*, nos. 395, 402; Courcel to Bismarck, 29 Sept.; Bismarck to Courcel, 30 Sept. 1884, *Affaires du Congo*, nos. 26, 27.

⁵¹ *Projet d'Instructions*, Nov. 1884; Ferry to Courcel, 8, 14 Nov. 1884, AEMD Afrique 109; *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 451.

⁵² Courcel to Ferry, 30 Aug.; 12, 23 Nov. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, nos. 385, 450, 460.

⁵³ Courcel to Ferry, 27 Dec., 29 Nov. 1884, *ibid.*, nos. 500, 471.

⁵⁴ Courcel to Ferry, 29 Nov. 1884, AE Allemagne 59 passage omitted from *Ddf*.

arguments for more narrowly defined boundaries in the west. After a stalwart rearguard action, Courcel agreed to Sette Cama as the northern limit of the Congo Basin on the Atlantic coast, drawing the boundary inland so as to exclude the Ogoûé but include the Niari-Kwilu in the free trade zone. The Ambassador had very little choice. The French had only one station on the river; the AIC had half a dozen, and their presence meant that the region was effectively in the free trade zone already.⁵⁵

Disputes over the Congo Basin's neutrality also contributed to the growing Franco-German estrangement. Ferry had no objection to the principle of free commercial navigation in wartime, but he failed to see how complete neutrality would be guaranteed. The powers could merely declare the Basin neutral, a declaration which would cost most of them nothing. Except for the AIC, which did not count, only France and Portugal would be prevented from using their territories in the Basin to support a war effort. However, the problem of neutrality was also resolved in the end by the ingenious—and meaningless—formula of 'neutralité facultative'. Courcel was quite pleased with the outcome. Though he was not anxious for any more quarrels with Germany, the controversy over the Basin and its neutrality had at least demonstrated the fact that the *entente* with Germany did not entail any sacrifice of French independence or dignity.⁵⁶

The most difficult problem was to settle the frontiers of the embryonic Congo Free State. Ferry had always intended to make formal recognition of the AIC conditional upon a territorial settlement involving the cession of the Kwilu to France. But negotiating with King Leopold was never easy, and Ferry's task was not made any easier by Bismarck's recognition of the AIC on 8 November, a week before the Conference began. What most infuriated the Prime Minister was the fact that German recognition extended to the south bank of Stanley Pool, where the French had some rather dubious claims which he was hoping to offer in exchange for the Kwilu.⁵⁷ For political reasons, Ferry could not afford to give much away; the Congo was the one issue at Berlin on which public opinion had to be reckoned with. The French public, he told Courcel in December, would accept almost any outcome to the Conference on one condition: 'C'est qu'il ne ressortira pas indirectement une victoire de l'Association sur M. de Brazza. M. de Brazza est populaire; il a un gros parti; on lui a confié quelque chose de l'honneur national; il nous faut quelque chose qui flatte l'amour propre du public français.'⁵⁸ If their support for the AIC forced Brazza's work to be sacrificed, Courcel warned the Germans, the consequences for the *entente* would be utterly disastrous.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Ferry to Courcel, 17, 20, 21, 22 Nov. 1884, AE Allemagne 59; Courcel to Ferry, 19, 20, 22, 23 Nov., 3 Dec. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, nos. 455, 456, 458, 459, 460, 475. See too: Courcel to Ferry, 25 Nov. 1884, AE Allemagne 59.

⁵⁶ Ferry to Courcel, 12 Dec. 1884; Courcel to Ferry, 12, 14, 27 Dec. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, nos. 482, 483, 486, 500.

⁵⁷ Ferry to Courcel, 21 Nov.; Courcel to Ferry, 22 Nov.; Ferry to Courcel, 25 Nov. 1884, AE Allemagne 59, *Ddf*, vol. 5, nos. 457, 464.

⁵⁸ Ferry to Courcel, 1 Dec. 1884, cited in G. de Courcel, *L'Influence de la Conférence de Berlin sur le droit colonial international*, Paris 1935, p. 95. The AIC was equally concerned about the political implications of Brazza's popularity. Borchgrave to Stanley, 1 Jan. 1885,

cited in F. Bontinck, *Aux origines de l'État Indépendant du Congo*, Louvain 1966, p. 267: 'M. de Brazza possède de nombreux et entreprenants amis à Paris qui s'emploient à le défendre . . . Ils ont la presse entre les mains. En chaque occasion où nous critiquons M. de Brazza, ils font appel au sentiment national, influencent l'opinion publique en faveur de leur héros de façon à contraindre le gouvernement à se montrer lui-même plus intraitable envers l'Association.'

⁵⁹ Courcel to Ferry, 3 Dec.; Courcel to Hatzfeldt, 5 Dec. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, nos. 475, 477; Courcel to Ferry, 9 Dec. 1884, AE Allemagne 60. Courcel warned Busch that the issue was important enough to 'compromettre devant l'opinion française et devant le Parlement l'œuvre même de la Conférence de Berlin'.

Yet the outcome of the negotiations was never seriously in doubt. Leopold knew from the start that he would have to surrender his trading stations on the Kwilu and could only bargain for adequate compensation. He also knew that he would eventually have to accept the best terms he could get. The AIC could not stand up to France alone, and neither Germany nor Britain would give it more than moral support. As Granville told Stanley quite bluntly at the end of December: 'He was not going to war for the Congo with France'.⁶⁰ The king's negotiators held out as long as they could, and on more than one occasion the talks seemed about to collapse. But they finally had to give way and agree to the cession of the Niari-Kwilu in return for recognition and the cession of French claims on the south bank of Stanley Pool. Leopold also had to drop his demand for an indemnity of five million francs, for long the sticking point in the negotiations, and settle instead for a promise of French government support in organizing a lottery intended to raise 20 million francs for the Association.⁶¹

As part of the agreement, Ferry also offered his good offices in negotiating a settlement between the AIC and Portugal. It was an offer which he came to regret as he was driven to distraction trying to narrow the gap between the extreme pretensions of two pig-headed antagonists.⁶² But there was an element of unreality about these negotiations too. The powers were bound to insist on giving the AIC an outlet to the sea, regardless of Portugal's traditional claim to sovereignty over the mouth of the Congo. In order to save face, the Portuguese Foreign Minister positively invited an ultimatum, telling the French Ambassador in Lisbon 'qu'il aimerait mieux se résigner à subir une solution en quelque sorte imposée par l'Europe que de souscrire volontairement à un arrangement contre lequel se prononcerait l'opinion publique de son pays'.⁶³ The terms of the final settlement did in fact meet Portugal's minimum demands, but it still took a joint ultimatum from Britain, France, and Germany to make her accept them. As Portugal's only friend at the Conference, France was the obvious mediator in the dispute, and she fulfilled this thankless task quite effectively. Her efforts did not increase her isolation. On the contrary, they allowed her, for once, to act in concert with Britain and Germany.

France did fail in her attempt to place the Niger under some form of international control, and this has usually been described as her biggest setback at the Conference. But she never had much chance of success. By November 1884 British supremacy on the Lower Niger, both politically and commercially, was an accomplished fact, and the British were determined to keep it that way. When Granville accepted Bismarck's invitation to Berlin, he ruled out any discussion of Britain's legitimately acquired

⁶⁰ Bontinck, *Origines*, p. 266. See too: Malet to King Leopold, 20 Dec. 1884, P. Knaplund (ed.), *Letters from the Berlin Embassy, 1871-1874, 1880-1885*, Annual Report of the American Historical Association, 1942, vol. 2, Washington 1944, p. 370: 'I would give the French the line they ask, that is the parallel 5° 12. They will not diminish this claim, because they are secure that no pressure will be brought to bear on them to induce them to do so. The Germans will do nothing and we shall do nothing beyond giving those platonic expressions of goodwill which are often more irritating than expressions of hostility.'

⁶¹ Ferry to Borchgrave, 5 Feb. 1885, *Ddf*, vol. 5, nos. 563, 564.

⁶² Ferry to Courcel, 11 Jan.; Ferry to Laboulaye, 21 Jan.; Ferry to Courcel, 28 Jan.; Laboulaye to Ferry, 22 Jan. 1885, *ibid.*, nos. 517, 531, 545, 534. The AIC began by demanding the left bank of the Congo below Noki, although this point had been the limit of the territories recognized by Germany. The Portuguese for their part absolutely refused to give up Cabinda and Molembo which they admitted to be of no practical value whatsoever.

⁶³ Laboulaye to Ferry, 22 Jan. 1885, *ibid.*, no. 534; Courcel to Ferry, 5 Feb. 1885, *AE Allemagne* 62; Malet to Granville, 7 Feb. 1885, Knaplund, *Letters*, pp. 380-1.

rights.⁶⁴ In his opening address to the Conference, Ambassador Malet drew a clear distinction between the Niger and the Congo. An international control commission might be necessary for the Congo; but Britain alone would be responsible for freedom of navigation along the Lower Niger. The ambassador, moreover, could be confident of German support for his argument. He had already shown Bismarck his instructions, and the latter had assured him 'that he should side with us on the Niger question whether France accepted or not'.⁶⁵

Significantly, the French did not challenge Malet's assertions either.⁶⁶ Ferry had never intended to launch an all-out assault on British supremacy in the Niger Delta, and by June 1884 he had begun to attach much greater importance to the consolidation of French influence along the Upper Niger: 'Pour le moment nous devons principalement nous attacher à développer nos relations avec le bassin supérieur du Niger, soit par le Sénégal même, soit par les Rivières du Sud et le Fouta Djallon . . .'.⁶⁷ With the approach of the Conference Ferry's priorities hardened, and his instructions to Courcel envisaged the possibility that the Niger might be divided into sections, 'sur lesquelles les autorités instituées pour assurer la liberté de navigation étendront successivement leur action suivant le développement même du commerce et les progrès de la civilisation'. Courcel was ordered to press for an international commission, but not to the point of holding up a settlement. If the other powers agreed to British supervision for the Lower Niger, 'vous aurez alors à nous réserver la faculté de veiller, dans les mêmes conditions, à la libre navigation du cours supérieur'.⁶⁸ Courcel followed his instructions, and the Conference duly recognized France and Britain as the guarantors of free navigation on the Upper and Lower Niger respectively. Ferry was quite satisfied with this result. 'Je verrai sans regret la prétention de l'Angleterre triomphant sur le Bas Niger,' he had told Courcel on 5 December, 'puisque nous resterons alors seuls maîtres du contrôle sur le Haut Niger.' According to Engelhardt, one of the French delegates and an expert on international navigation, the settlement was something of a victory. By agreeing to implement the free navigation clauses which had been drafted for the Congo, where there was to be an international commission, the British had implicitly recognized the principle of international supervision on the Lower Niger, even if they were to be the only supervisors.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Granville to Malet, 17, 22 Oct. 1884, FOCP 5023, nos. 40, 62. See too: Ferry to Raindre, 21 Oct. 1884, AE Allemagne 59; Departmental Note, 27 Oct. 1884, Ddf, vol. 5, no. 446.

⁶⁵ Protocol I, 15 Nov. 1884, MAE, *Documents diplomatiques: Affaires du Congo et de l'Afrique occidentale 1884-1885*, Paris 1885, p. 63; Malet to Granville, 13 Nov. 1884, Further Correspondence . . ., FOCP 5033, no. 82; Malet to Granville, 15 Nov. 1884, Knaplund, *Letters*, p. 354. The French had also been warned not to expect German support. Busch told Raindre, the French chargé d'affaires, in October that, since trade on the lower Niger was shared between Britain and France, 'nous paraîtrions naturellement les plus qualifiés pour défendre les intérêts européens dans le bassin du fleuve'. Raindre to MAE, 22 Oct. 1884, AE Allemagne 59.

⁶⁶ Nor were the British overly concerned about the possibility of French opposition. Analysing a recent

publication of the Ministry of Marine and Colonies, *Sénégal et Niger: la France dans l'Afrique occidentale, 1879-1883*, Paris 1884, Crowe noted the emphasis on linking the Senegal with the Upper Niger and concluded that, 'if France comes to the Conference with these views, we need hardly expect much discussion from her as to our claims to preponderance in the Lower Niger'. Crowe, Memorandum on the Position of Great Britain on the Niger, 7 Nov. 1884, FOCP 5033, no. 26. Ironically, the author of *Sénégal et Niger*, Colonel Borgnis-Desbordes, was a vocal opponent of Ferry's Lower Niger policy.

⁶⁷ Ferry to MMC, 11 June 1884 [cancelled passage in original draft], AEMD Afrique 86.

⁶⁸ Ferry to Courcel, 8, 17, 30 Nov. 1884, AEMD Afrique 109; AE Allemagne 59; ANSOM Afrique VI 43.

⁶⁹ Ferry to Courcel, 5 Dec. 1884; Engelhardt, Note, 16 Dec. 1884, AE Allemagne 60. Engelhardt's argument would have had even less substance if Malet had followed his instructions to the letter. The ambassador had been

Only the Ministry of Marine and Colonies regretted the loss of the Lower Niger. By the time of the Conference, Under-Secretary Faure's earlier proposal to neutralize the Niger had become a central feature of the Ministry's West African policy. When Faure learned of British claims to exclusive control over the Lower Niger, he called on Ferry to reject them and to neutralize the Niger on the same terms as the Congo, even if it meant abandoning exclusive French control over the upper reaches of the river. The Prime Minister rejected this suggestion out of hand. Having fought to limit the principle of neutrality in the Congo Basin, he was not about to fight for its extension to the Niger. Still less was he willing to give up France's special status on the Upper Niger, which the Conference had just confirmed.⁷⁰ Logically, Ferry's decision was perfectly sound. Whatever the difficulties encountered in the Western Sudan, the French still had interests worth defending there. On the Lower Niger they had none. But the Colonial Department remained unconvinced. Even after the signature of the Berlin Act, Faure and his officials toyed with the idea of one last attempt to modify its terms before it was formally ratified. Only in September 1885 did Faure's successor belatedly and ungraciously accept the *fait accompli*.⁷¹ Some officials took even longer to accept it. As late as September 1886 General Borgnis-Desbordes, the Upper Senegal's first commander-in-chief and the founder of Bamako, was still denouncing 'le traité de Berlin sur la navigation du Niger [qui] a d'un trait de plume supprimé la plus grande partie des avantages que nous pourrions retirer un jour des efforts et des sacrifices faits par la France'.⁷²

When seen in the context of French African priorities, the Berlin West Africa Conference was not the débâcle which critics, then and later, have maintained. France kept her existing possessions immune from the virus of free trade and obtained a measure of international recognition for her privileged position on the Upper Niger, which was all the Quai d'Orsay if not the Rue Royale really wanted. She secured the fruits of Brazza's efforts in the Congo and gained a potential outlet for Brazzaville to the sea. She had to recognize the *Association Internationale du Congo* but the right of pre-emption made this an easy burden to bear. Not that the creation of the Congo Free State was considered such a hardship. According to Courcel, it was better for the French Congo to have Leopold as a neighbour than 'une république de nègres américanisés ou de mulâtres, comme Libéria ou Haïti'.⁷³ As for the principles of effective occupation, the French were quite content to remain on the sidelines and let Bismarck and the British fight it out.

Nor should the extent of the Franco-German estrangement at Berlin be exaggerated. Despite their disagreements over the Congo, both sides tried to observe the terms of their limited co-operation. Courcel kept the Chancellor's office informed of his instructions 'afin d'agir dans un complet accord avec elle'. The Germans showed their draft proposals to Courcel before submitting them to the Conference. Indeed, the draft declaration on effective occupation was drawn up jointly by the French and German technical delegates.⁷⁴ True to his word, Bismarck also continued his courtship of

ordered to state that the British were willing to accept the principle of free navigation 'by becoming parties to an international declaration'. In his opening speech, however, Malet changed the phrase slightly to 'par une déclaration formelle'.

⁷¹ Goldscheider, Note, 17 July 1885, ANSOM Afrique IV 12/b; Rousseau to MAE, 26 Sept. 1885, AEMD Afrique 85. The Berlin Act was ratified by the Chamber on 3 Aug. and by the Senate on 14 Dec. 1885.

⁷² Borgnis-Desbordes, Note, 10 Sept. 1886, ANSOM Sénégal IV 84/a.

⁷³ Courcel to Ferry, 5 Feb. 1885, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 554.

⁷⁴ Courcel to Ferry, 12 Dec., 12 Nov. 1884, AE

⁷⁰ Faure to Ferry, 12 Dec. 1884, with minutes by Ferry, AEMD Afrique 109.

France on the Egyptian question. When the Egyptian government, acting on British advice, illegally suspended the Sinking Fund in September 1884, Germany, Austria, and Russia had joined France in a collective protest which forced the Egyptians to back down.⁷⁵ During his visit to Paris in October, Count Herbert von Bismarck had assured Ferry that 'le gouvernement allemand est résolu à aller jusqu'au bout, et ce bout c'est l'évacuation par les Anglais'.⁷⁶ When the British formulated new financial proposals in November, Bismarck refused to consider them or to authorize confidential discussions among the ambassadors. Instead, he threw his weight behind the counter-proposals which the French submitted in January 1885, an action which Malet described as 'unnecessary and . . . distinctly unfriendly'.⁷⁷ Ferry himself acknowledged the Chancellor's crucial role in persuading the British government to accept an international as opposed to a British guarantee for a new Egyptian loan of £9 million.⁷⁸

But opposition to Britain proved a shaky foundation for a meaningful Franco-German *entente*. Despite his co-operation with Germany in tropical Africa and his desire for German support over Egypt, Ferry never lost sight of his overriding objective: to negotiate a settlement of the Egyptian question and so remove the principal obstacle to the re-establishment of the old Anglo-French 'Liberal *Entente*'. This too was the objective of his successor as Foreign Minister, Charles de Freycinet.⁷⁹ The French never trusted Bismarck's overtures, suspecting the Chancellor—quite rightly—of using Egypt to perpetuate Anglo-French conflict and to extort concessions from Britain in the colonial sphere.⁸⁰ Their refusal to serve as his *bâton égyptien* in turn convinced Bismarck that French distrust of Germany would always outweigh her hostility towards Britain.⁸¹ After the fall of Ferry's ministry at the end of March 1885, the Franco-German flirtation was soon broken off. By May Bismarck was warning Courcel that he could not be more Francophile than the French; if France was going to seek an Egyptian settlement with Britain, he would have to do the same.⁸² The warning made little impression. Freycinet was even more suspicious of the Germans than his predecessor, and more convinced of Britain's genuine desire to evacuate Egypt. Though anxious not to 'fausser campagne à l'Allemagne, dont l'appui peut nous être encore bien utile', he was even more determined to end the policy of 'tracasseries gratuites et provocations inutiles à l'adresse de l'Angleterre, tracasseries

Allemagne 60, 59; Billot to Waddington, 18 Nov. 1884, AEPA Waddington 4; Courcel to Ferry, 27 Dec. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 500.

⁷⁵ On the advice of Lord Northbrook, the Egyptian government diverted surpluses from the *Caisse de la Dette* into the Egyptian Treasury. Though the government quickly rescinded the measure, it was brought before the Mixed Tribunals by the commissioners of the *Caisse* and had to suffer the humiliation of being condemned by the Court of First Instance in December 1884.

⁷⁶ Ferry to Waddington, 8 Oct. 1884, AEPA Waddington 4.

⁷⁷ Malet to Granville, 17 Jan. 1885, Knaplund, *Letters*, p. 378. Bismarck had told Malet when the latter first approached him that he would not 'lend the weight of his approval to proposals objected to by France'; still less would Germany 'use its influence to force [the proposals] on France'. Malet to Granville, 22 Nov. 1884, *ibid.*, p. 355.

⁷⁸ Hohenlohe to Bismarck, 27 Jan. 1885, *Große Politik*, vol. 3, no. 698. Bismarck hoped that his support of French efforts to extend international control over Egyptian affairs would finally dispel their mistrust of his intentions. Bismarck to Hohenlohe, 24 Jan. 1885, *ibid.*, no. 697.

⁷⁹ Freycinet's policy was to 'déterminer l'évacuation de l'Égypte et à faire disparaître ainsi cette terrible pierre d'achoppement entre la France et l'Angleterre'. Freycinet to Waddington, 6 June 1885, AEPA Waddington 5.

⁸⁰ Courcel to Ferry, 11 Jan., 11 Mar. 1885, *Ddf*, vol. 5, nos. 518, 622; C. R. Scott to Sanderson, 14 Mar. 1885; Malet to Granville (reporting conversations with Courcel), Knaplund, *Letters*, pp. 389, 407-8.

⁸¹ Bismarck to Hohenlohe, 25 May 1885, *Große Politik*, vol. 3, no. 702.

⁸² Courcel to Freycinet, 10, 24, 28 May 1885, *Ddf*, vol. 6, nos. 23, 27, 29.

et provocations qui pouvaient favoriser les visées secrètes de certaine politique, mais qui compromettaient sans compensation les bons rapports de la France avec son alliée naturelle'.⁸³ With the fall of the Gladstone government in June 1885 and the arrival of the pro-German Salisbury at the Foreign Office, the fate of the Franco-German *entente* was effectively sealed.⁸⁴

French African policy did suffer a major setback in 1884, though few realized it at the time. This setback, however, occurred in London rather than Berlin. By rejecting a reduction of 0.5 per cent in the interest rate on the Egyptian debt, the French helped to scuttle the London conference, and with it the political agreement which Granville and Waddington had just signed. Fear of domestic political opposition seems to have been the crucial factor in Ferry's decision to let the conference fail.⁸⁵ But the Prime Minister was also confident that Egypt's continued financial crisis would eventually force the British to come to terms. Waddington, who appreciated the importance of his agreement with Granville better than anyone, was equally confident that the extension of international control over Egyptian finances would lead naturally to the neutralization of the country and a British evacuation. Nor was their confidence entirely misplaced. The London convention of March 1885 did indeed bring Egyptian finances under closer European supervision, as well as expanding the *Caisse de la Dette* to include a German and Russian member. Once the convention had been ratified, moreover, Gladstone was anxious to begin talks on neutralization and evacuation.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, Ferry's surrender to his parliamentary critics was, in hindsight at least, a huge miscalculation. Successive French governments would continue to pursue the goal of a negotiated British evacuation until the early 1890s. But they never again came as close to achieving it as they did in the summer of 1884. Compared to the failure in London, French setbacks at Berlin—if such indeed they were—do not appear very significant.

⁸³ Freycinet to Waddington, 6 June 1885, AEPA Waddington 5; Freycinet to Courcel, 15 June 1885, *Ddf*, vol. 6, no. 36. See too: Malet to Granville, 23 May 1885, Knaplund, *Letters*, p. 408: '[Courcel] declared that M. de Freycinet . . . believed Mr Gladstone to be sincere and a friend to France, and that, if it were possible to smooth our path in Egypt, it would in reality be the best policy for France, as leading to a more proximate retirement of the British forces . . .'

⁸⁴ See: 'Summary of the Memorandum by Sir Philip Currie of his Conversations with Prince Bismarck, September 28–30, 1885', Lady G. Cecil, *Life of Robert Marquis of Salisbury*, 4 vols., London 1931, vol. 3, pp. 257–8, 261.

⁸⁵ Parliamentary opposition to his foreign and colonial policy was one of Ferry's constant preoccupations throughout his ministry. See, for example: Ferry to Waddington, 9 Dec. 1883, AEPA Waddington 4: 'Ma grande peur . . . c'est la Chambre. Si on ne lui rapporte un succès quelconque [in Tonkin], elle recommencera la cacade d'Égypte'. Bismarck was also convinced that Ferry's over-riding concern was the survival of his government. Ampthill to Granville, 10 Apr. 1884, Knaplund, *Letters*, pp. 322–3.

⁸⁶ Waddington to Ferry, 22 Jan. 1885, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 533; Waddington to Freycinet, 11 May, 3 June 1885, *Ddf*, vol. 6, nos. 24, 32. Talks did begin on the Suez Canal, but they were suspended by Salisbury pending the British elections.

British Informal Empire, Imperial Ambitions, Defensive Strategies, and the Anglo-Portuguese Congo Treaty of February 1884

G. N. SANDERSON

In July 1890 Lord Salisbury nostalgically recalled that until about a decade earlier Britain had controlled most of the accessible regions of Africa 'without being put to the inconvenience of protectorates or anything of that sort'.¹ Effective though this control had been, it was an 'invisible empire' which could hardly be delineated on the map.² It operated through preponderant influence over chiefs and rulers who were in theory independent and who in practice often retained considerable local freedom of action. It rested on the ability to prevent annexations by other European powers; its success therefore precluded visible changes from African to European political control. Although this paper is primarily concerned with Western Africa, British informal empire was of course by no means confined to this region. Indeed, on the west coast the British monopoly of influence was broken by the existence of French possessions—although between c.1840 and c.1880 the French were not usually very active or formidable competitors.

In Southern Africa, informal British preponderance extended far beyond the boundaries of the formal British possessions at the Cape and Natal. It covered the whole line of coast between the southern limits, for long indeterminate, of Portuguese Angola and Mozambique. Inland, its extent was left conveniently indefinite; but it was axiomatic that 'the British possessions . . . as commanding the whole accessible seaboard must inevitably take part in and control . . . the relations of the interior'³—an 'interior' which of course included Afrikaner republics as well as African polities. The east coast of Africa, from Natal to Suez, was also by the 1870s an unbroken and unchallenged sphere of British preponderance, in spite of the total absence of British possessions or protectorates. The Portuguese in Mozambique, their administration at that time confined to a few coastal forts, were not serious competitors: Lord Carnarvon (Colonial Secretary, 1874–8) regarded the interior of Mozambique as *res nullius* and a legitimate field for the extension of British influence. Zanzibar and Egypt as an African power, were both British client-states: as a British diplomatist put it in 1877, they 'do pretty well what we tell them to do'.⁴ In 1876 an Egyptian–Zanzibari territorial dispute on the Somali coast was settled by the mere *fiat*

¹ Speech in the Lords, 10 July 1890: cited in Lady G. Cecil, *Life of Robert, Marquis of Salisbury*, 4 vols., London 1921, vol. 3, pp. 225–6.

² However, Map 10.1 (below) attempts to do so.

³ P. Wodehouse (Governor, Cape Colony) to duke of Buckingham (Colonial Secretary), 18 July 1868, cited in

C. W. De Kiewiet, *British Colonial Policy and the South African Republics, 1848–1872*, London 1929, p. 261.

⁴ R. Morier (Lisbon) to Lord Derby (Foreign Secretary), 15 May 1877, cited in R. Anstey, *Britain and the Congo in the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford 1962, p. 86.

of the Foreign Office; and in September 1877 Egypt undertook not to alienate her African coastal possessions without British consent.⁵ Another important sphere of British preponderance was Madagascar, where the dominant Hova dynasty had since the 1860s come under very strong British missionary influence. London encouraged the Hovas to extend and consolidate their local hegemony and deployed its naval superiority in the Indian Ocean to deter intervention in Madagascar by other powers, especially France.⁶

West Africa differed from East Africa in that formal British possessions and protectorates did exist. Numerous establishments, scattered along the coast from the Gambia to the Bight of Benin, were held in full sovereignty. But, except on the Gold Coast after the purchase of the Dutch forts in 1872, these formal possessions were very widely dispersed; and in the 1870s they were still everywhere very limited in area. Many of them were indeed microscopic enclaves measured in acres rather than square miles. On the Gold Coast, formal sovereignty did not usually extend beyond the walls of the forts themselves; on the Slave Coast, it was confined to the island of Lagos and three outlying villages with Customs houses. However, both on the Gold Coast and elsewhere 'a kind of irregular jurisdiction had grown up, extending itself far beyond the limits of [formal sovereignty], by the submission of the Natives themselves, whether Chiefs or Traders, to British Equity'. This 'irregular jurisdiction' was regularized by the Foreign Jurisdiction Act of 1843 and subsequent similar instruments, whereby the Crown, while repudiating any claim to sovereignty, nevertheless legalized and empowered British officials to enforce the judgements of unofficial British-dominated tribunals already existing by 'usage and sufferance'.⁷

In 1872 the 'usage-and-sufferance' tribunals ('Courts of Equity') of the Niger delta were regularized by Order in Council; and the local British Consul, who had by usage and sufferance informally supervised their proceedings, now became officially responsible for their activities and for the enforcement of their judgements. At the same time the consular residence was transferred from Fernando Po, in Spanish territory, to Old Calabar.⁸ But the Niger delta and its adjacent coasts, like other regions where 'regularized' extra-territorial jurisdictions had been created, still remained 'foreign countries' in law; and as British sovereignty was expressly disclaimed, these arrangements could hardly receive international recognition. However, in the early 1870s this seemed to present no problem, for no other power seemed at all likely to challenge British preponderance in the regions concerned.

After the Ashanti War of 1873-4 it became evident that continued occupation of the Gold Coast forts would be politically precarious and economically pointless without the assumption of full administrative powers over a continuous strip of coastal territory. Some parts of the coast and their immediate hinterlands had indeed been regarded as a very ill-defined unofficial 'protectorate' since the 1840s; but the administrative powers assumed in 1874 were so far reaching that, even though sovereignty was still not

⁵ R. Coupland, *The Exploitation of East Africa, 1856-1890*, London 1939, pp. 271-99. E. Hertslet, *The Map of Africa by Treaty*, 3 vols., London 1909, 3rd edn. (reprint of 1967), vol. 2, no. 178, pp. 615-16.

⁶ J. S. Swinburne, 'The Influence of Madagascar on International Relations, 1878-1904', London M.Phil. Thesis (1969).

⁷ Select Committee Report, Gold Coast Jurisdiction, 1842; The Foreign Jurisdiction Act, 24 Aug. 1843: printed C. W. Newbury, *British Policy towards West Africa: Select Documents 1786-1874*, Oxford 1965, pp. 548-53.

⁸ Rules and Regulations framed by H. M. Consul at Old Calabar, 29 Apr. 1872: printed Newbury, *West Africa, 1786-1874*, pp. 580-2.

asserted, the coastal strip became in effect part of the 'formal' empire. But such extensions of formal administrative control were very unwelcome to British policy-makers. They were seen as the worst of all imperial options, a last resort to be reluctantly accepted only when political control was deemed indispensable but was manifestly unattainable by any other means. Even Lord Carnarvon, whose imperial aspirations extended to the application to 'much of Africa' of a British 'Monroe Doctrine', was very reluctant to extend formal control on the Gold Coast in 1874.⁹

In the 1870s and early 1880s West African possessions and protectorates in particular were still seen by the official mind as establishments 'which commercially represent but little profit and financially represent only a deficit'. Indeed, between 1874 and 1883 the annual value of the round trade with British West African possessions were consistently little more than half that of the trade with West African regions not under any European sovereignty but usually subject to informal British influence. The comparatively modest volume of trade with 'possessions' did not always generate enough revenue to maintain their own colonial administration; and they had from time to time to be rescued from insolvency by substantial treasury subventions, at the expense of the British taxpayer. As late as June 1883 British protectorates were still stigmatized as 'unwelcome burdens', tolerable only when indispensable for the forestalling of French protectorates.¹⁰

British possessions and protectorates were hardly more popular with British merchants than they were with British policy-makers. They were of course a lesser evil than foreign possessions, where British trade was usually handicapped by discriminatory import duties and navigation regulations. But the administrative expenses of British possessions meant the levying of substantial import duties; and free trade principles denied any special advantages to British merchants. Wherever possible, British traders preferred to do business at ports still under local African control, where they escaped with comparatively insignificant payments and 'presents' to the local rulers. The Colonial Office was well aware of the unpopularity of colonial import duties and their depressing effect upon trade with British possessions. In March 1883 it rejected a Foreign Office proposal to 'annex all unoccupied territory between Lago . . . and the Gaboon' with the argument that 'we should have to raise a revenue . . . by levying customs duties, and I doubt English traders wishing for this'.¹¹

What the traders valued was not British administration but British informal influence. This was sometimes exercised, as in the Niger delta, through an extra-territorial jurisdiction. Elsewhere, it often operated without this embellishment, through the direct local application of sea power. The Navy intervened to suppress the slave trade and piracy, both of which tended to strangle legitimate trade; to 'persuade' local African rulers to open their markets to Europeans; and to discourage these rulers from frustrating trade by 'engaging in petty wars among themselves, or getting into

⁹ Draft Proclamation defining the Nature and Extent of the Queen's Jurisdiction on the Gold Coast, Aug. 1874: printed Newbury, *West Africa, 1786-1874*, pp. 582-4. W. D. McIntyre, *The Imperial Frontier in the Tropics, 1865-75*, London 1967, pp. 278-85.

¹⁰ Salisbury to Hicks Beach (Colonial Secretary), 10 Oct. 1879: cited in: V. Hicks Beach, *Life of Sir M. Hicks Beach*, 2 vols., London 1932, vol. 1, p. 72; see Table 10.1, 'British Trade with West Africa, 1874-1884'. H. P.

Anderson, memorandum, 11 June 1883: printed in C. W. Newbury, *British Policy towards West Africa, Select Documents 1875-1914*, Oxford 1971, pp. 179-81.

¹¹ R. H. Meade, minute, 28 Mar. 1883 on Foreign Office to Colonial Office, 12 Mar., cited in R. E. Robinson and J. Gallagher with A. Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism*, 2nd edn., London 1981, p. 168.

TABLE 10.1. British Trade with West Africa, 1874-1884 (in £000s)

YEAR	1874	1875	1876	1877	1878	1879	1880	1881	1882	1883	1884
Exports to: ^a											
British Possessions	932	853	803	892	972	846	891	712	876	926	1,001
French Possessions	22	20	20	33	34	52	56	78	73	93	214
Portuguese Possessions	146	86	115	117	105	138	195	229	281	305	681
'Non-Possessions' ^b											
Imports from:											
British Possessions	598	610	681	768	621	580	779	510	633	730	1,099
French Possessions	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	6	4	15	16	18
Portuguese Possessions	122	77	82	94	73	73	185	136	142	121	117
'Non-Possessions' ^b	1,824	1,651	1,598	1,531	1,213	1,386	1,706	1,449	1,583	1,617	1,360
Round Table with:											
British Possessions	1,530	1,463	1,484	1,660	1,593	1,426	1,670	1,222	1,509	1,656	2,100
French Possessions	22	20	20	33	34	52	62	82	88	109	232
Portuguese Possessions	268	163	197	211	178	211	380	365	423	426	798
'Non-Possessions' ^b	2,854	2,592	2,719	2,842	2,498	2,243	2,670	2,455	2,662	3,110	2,680

^a Does not include goods exported to the Continent and ultimately re-exported to West Africa ('indirect' exports)

^b i.e., West Africa 'not particularly designated'

Source: Newbury, *British Policy towards West Africa*, vol. 2, Statistical Appendices, Tables III and IV

disputes with European traders'.¹² The British commercial and manufacturing interests which between 1882 and 1884 protested against the proposed British recognition of Portuguese sovereignty on the maritime Congo did not call for a British protectorate, or even for the introduction of extra-territorial jurisdiction. What they demanded was the preservation of 'independent' African control, by British support for 'the rights of the natives on the banks of the Congo and the adjacent neutral territories . . . , so that in future there may be no interference on the part of *any* Power with the existing free navigation and commerce of that River and its tributaries'.¹³

Unofficial empire on the lower Niger, and the extra-territorial jurisdiction that was its instrument, were of course based ultimately on armed force or the threat of it: action—often very vigorous action—by gunboats at the Consul's disposal; or at least 'the knowledge on the part of the Native Chiefs that a ship of war is within reach'.¹⁴ But on the maritime Congo 'the rights of the natives' and 'free navigation' had since the 1850s been supported entirely by frequent and energetic use of naval armed force, uncomplicated by consular supervision and unadorned by extra-territorial jurisdiction, against those perceived as obstructing legitimate trade—slave-traders, pirates, and their reputed African associates and accomplices.

On the Congo, however, sea power was also used to deny and frustrate the historic claims of another European state—Portugal. In 1817 London had seemed to recognize Portuguese sovereignty at the Congo mouth and on the adjacent ocean coasts between latitudes 5° 12' and 8° south. But in 1845 this recognition was repudiated. Palmerston now feared that Portuguese occupation of this coast would prevent 'unrestricted [commercial] intercourse' with the Congo; and in 1849 he saw in any extension of Portuguese coastal sovereignty a positive hindrance to the suppression of the slave trade. In subsequent years British naval officers concluded treaties of 'trade and friendship' with African rulers in this region. When Lisbon protested that these chiefs were Portuguese subjects, London retorted that they were 'manifestly and notoriously' independent, Portugal's rights from prior discovery having lapsed 'for want of occupation'. In 1855 Portugal took a step towards remedying this deficiency by occupying Ambriz, just north of latitude 8° south. But London refused to recognize this occupation; and in June 1856 warned Lisbon that 'any attempt to extend' it farther to the north would 'be opposed by Her Majesty's Naval Forces'. In 1857 a Portuguese military detachment was indeed forcibly removed from Punta da Lenha on the north bank of the maritime Congo; and during the next ten years one or two other Portuguese attempts to establish occupation north of Ambriz were similarly frustrated.¹⁵

After the removal of the Portuguese in 1857, Punta da Lenha became the headquarters of the surviving slave-traders, who from time to time attacked ships and 'factories' engaged in legitimate trade. The destruction in 1865 of a British trading vessel was followed by extensive British naval action against slave-traders and their

¹² W. H. Wylde (Slave Trade Dept, FO), minute, 25 Mar. 1869, cited in Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, p. 27.

¹³ Memorials of the Chambers of Commerce of Manchester (13 Nov. 1882) and of other cities, Nov. 1882–Apr. 1883, cited in Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, pp. 116–20.

¹⁴ Wylde, minute of 25 Mar. 1869, cited in Anstey,

Britain and the Congo, p. 27.

¹⁵ Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, pp. 39, 41–51, citing FO to Howard de Walden (Lisbon), 26 Sept. 1846; FO to Lavradio, 26 Nov. 1853; Howard to d'Athoguia, 2 June 1856. F. Latour da Veiga Pinto, *Le Portugal et le Congo au XIX^e siècle*, Paris 1972, pp. 104–14, 122. See Map 5.1, 'Missionary Activities in the Lower Congo before 1885', above.

African associates. After 1865, thanks to these operations and the ever-tightening blockade, the Congo slave trade was virtually extinct; but from about 1869 the former slave-traders began to victimize legitimate commerce by organizing a piratical 'protection racket'. Between 1869 and 1875 there were six British naval operations against these pirates, who were finally suppressed in September 1875 by a squadron of seven warships under Commodore Hewett.¹⁶

In December 1875 Lisbon protested against Hewett's operations as a violation of Portuguese territorial waters. Early in 1876 the Foreign Office had under its consideration the 'protectorate' that the British naval officer and explorer V. L. Cameron had proclaimed over the Congo basin in December 1874. With informal empire working so admirably on the maritime Congo, the responsibilities of such a protectorate were of course utterly unattractive to London—just as they still were in 1878, when H. M. Stanley completely failed to interest the British in formal empire on the Congo. Cameron's 'protectorate' was therefore disavowed. But the maintenance of informal empire on the maritime Congo evidently implied the total rejection of any Portuguese claim to sovereignty. Lord Derby (Foreign Secretary, 1874–8) was indeed not entirely happy about a British position based essentially on mere force, and he asked for a review of Congo policy. But the official reply to the Portuguese protest of December 1875 was completely intransigent. London refused to negotiate or even to discuss; and Lisbon was warned that the orders of 1856, requiring the Navy to 'remove' Portuguese establishments north of Ambriz, were still in force.¹⁷

In August 1884 the German Foreign Secretary Paul von Hatzfeldt was to observe that Britain's overwhelming informal preponderance, both in accessible regions of Africa and elsewhere overseas, rested upon her success 'in keeping all others out'.¹⁸ Informal empire did indeed depend, absolutely, upon Britain's ability to deter or prevent other powers from staking out new territorial claims; and, where Portugal in particular was concerned, to ride roughshod over any inconvenient assertion of old, 'historic', sovereign rights. This ability was of course a function of the general oceanic hegemony that Britain had enjoyed since 1815. But two further factors are also relevant. Between 1840 and 1880 French policy-makers were almost always reluctant to jeopardize Anglo-French relations in Europe by pushing extra-European rivalries to the point of dangerous confrontation. In the late 1830s Adophe Thièrs, with the strong support of the *Ministère de la Marine*, had engineered a major challenge to British preponderance not only in the Levant and the Middle East but in the Indian Ocean and on the coasts of Africa. But Louis-Philippe shrank from pressing this challenge home, and replaced Thièrs with the comparatively anglophile Guizot. Napoleon III appears to have avoided on principle confrontation with Britain anywhere in Africa. He resisted pressure from various quarters, including the *Marine* and the sugar-planters of Île Bourbon (Réunion), for a more combative policy in East Africa and Madagascar. By formally recognizing in 1862 the independence of Zanzibar, which was already a British client-state, he virtually acquiesced in British preponderance on the East African coast between Mozambique and Somalia. In West Africa, governors of Senegal who

¹⁶ Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, pp. 14–28.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 52–6. Latour da Veiga Pinto, *Le Portugal et le Congo*, pp. 126–8, citing Derby to Saldanha, 10 Feb. 1876.

¹⁸ J. Lepsius, A. Mendelsohn-Bartholdy, F. Thimme

(eds.), *Die Große Politik der europäischen Kabinette, 1871–1914: Sammlung der Diplomatischen Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes*, 40 vols., Berlin 1922–7, vol. 3, No. 681, Hatzfeldt to Bismarck, 11 Aug. 1884.

hankered after territorial expansion were, especially after 1860, sharply checked; and Napoleon, overriding his Foreign Minister Walewski, denied all support to Portugal against the British veto on expansion north of Ambriz.¹⁹

The second special factor favouring the growth of unofficial empire was the prolonged absence after 1815 of another major power able and willing to align itself with France against Britain overseas. By 1880 the whole structure of informal empire—what Hatzfeldt called ‘the British system’ of keeping all others out—was itself, in a sense, based upon ‘usage and sufferance’. It had developed and flourished because, after the unsuccessful single-handed challenge by France in the late 1830s, it had never been seriously challenged by anyone. It also depended, to a considerable degree, upon bluff. In the early 1880s British naval preponderance was by no means as decisive as it had been even ten years earlier: in up-to-date capital ships, the British navy was now inferior to the combined fleets of France and Germany.²⁰ In any case, no British government of the 1870s or the 1880s—least of all Gladstone’s Liberal administration of 1880–5—would have contemplated European war in defence of informal empire in tropical Africa. The ‘British system’ was therefore soon thrown into serious disarray by the revival in and after 1879 of effective French competition in Africa. And when in 1884–5 Germany aligned herself with France, albeit briefly and rather uneasily, the ‘British system’ collapsed almost overnight.

Between 1870 and 1878, however, British informal empire enjoyed a kind of Indian summer, during which some British statesmen contemplated—though they did not achieve—its extension to whole continents and oceans: the whole of Africa, the South Pacific. The defeat of France in 1870–1, and her subsequent precarious isolation, seemed to have virtually eliminated her as a competitor in Africa. Moreover, the French Foreign Ministry was by the mid-1870s willing to sacrifice African ‘colonial opportunities’ *en bloc* rather than risk the danger that Anglo-French relations in Europe might be poisoned by disputes in Africa. London’s diplomatic support for France during the ‘war-in-sight’ crisis of 1875 had not indeed gone beyond an expression of British disapproval at Berlin; but in 1875 *any* diplomatic support against Germany was too precious to be lightly hazarded. In 1875–6 the Quai d’Orsay was prepared, in return for the comparatively trivial compensation of the Gambia, to disinterest France politically along the whole West African coast between Senegal and Gabon. The *Direction des Colonies* protested, but in vain; and this remarkable bargain was frustrated by British ministerial and bureaucratic incompetence rather than by the strength of French opposition.²¹

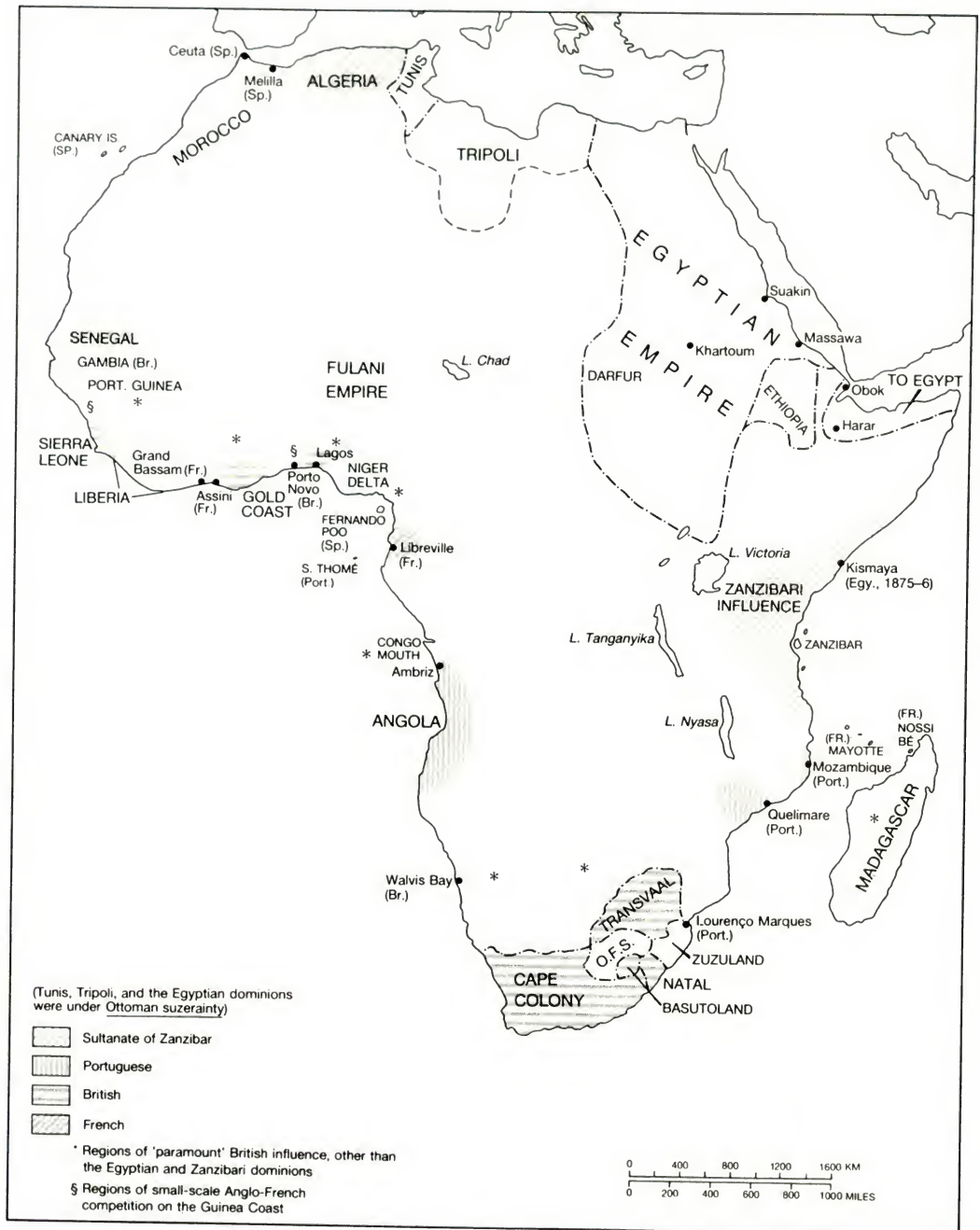
The British were not greatly disconcerted by this fiasco. In the mid-1870s the French on the Guinea coast were still a minor local irritant. The main British motive for negotiating had been to insure against any possible revival of French competition on a scale which might drive London to the detested expedient of acquiring new West African possessions. The *Direction des Colonies* did indeed suspect the British of planning

¹⁹ R. M. Waller, ‘Anglo-French Diplomacy Overseas, 1835–45, with special Reference to West Africa and the Indian Ocean’, London Ph.D. thesis 1979. G. N. Sanderson, ‘The European Partition of Africa: Coincidence or Conjunction?’, in *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 3 (1974), pp. 1–54. H. Brunschwig, ‘Anglophobia and French African

Policy’, in P. Gifford and R. Louis (eds.), *France and Britain in Africa*, New Haven 1971, pp. 3–34. Latour da Veiga Pinto, *Le Portugal et le Congo*, pp. 112–14.

²⁰ A. J. Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880–1905*, London n.d. [1940], pp. 119–39.

²¹ J. D. Hargreaves, *Prelude to the Partition of West Africa*, London 1963, pp. 174–95.



MAP 10.1. The Climax of British Unofficial Empire: Africa on the Eve of European Partition, c.1878

Source: J. D. Fage and M. Verity, *An Atlas of African History*, 2nd edn., London 1978, map 53 (with additions by the author).

to 'subjugate Dahomey' and to carve out a large West African territorial empire. But in West Africa at least, the British had in 1875-6 no such plans; the safeguarding of informal empire was all they wanted. In Eastern and Southern Africa, however, Lord Carnarvon had launched a very positive and ambitious drive for the expansion of empire both formal and informal. In 1877 the Transvaal was to be annexed to the formal empire; and by the end of 1876 Carnarvon was already looking forward to the day when informal British penetration of the Zanzibari mainland dominions in East Africa would link up with similar penetration from southern into South Central Africa to create an enormous and territorially continuous sphere of British preponderance. The *Direction des Colonies*, and French colonialist circles generally, became increasingly uneasy at what they knew, or guessed, of these projects; and feared, naturally enough, that this aggressively expansionist policy would soon be extended to West Africa.²² But so long as the Quai d'Orsay insisted that the security of metropolitan France demanded the strict avoidance of African quarrels with London, there was little that the colonialists could do to counter the real or supposed plans of the British.

By the mid-1870s, thanks to the prolonged absence of effective European competition in Africa (and indeed in Oceania too), British policy-makers had developed the habit of thinking that in regions where informal preponderance had become established, Britain as the 'paramount power' could legitimately object to the intrusion of others. The doctrine of paramountcy seems originally to have emerged simply as a concept which would cover the rich variety of expedients devised by London to achieve the reality of control without the costs and problems of possession or administration. Legally, even an established paramountcy was based on nothing more than 'usage and sufferance'; nevertheless, the British expected other powers to respect it. This doctrine had of course no validity in international law; and in 1884-5 London had no legal grounds for protest against actual or threatened German incursions into regions where the British considered themselves to be 'paramount'. But communications to Berlin on this subject were often couched in tones of pained remonstrance: friendly powers, it was implied, ought not to behave in this ill-mannered and 'ungentlemanly' way.²³

During the mid-1870s, however, the extension and consolidation of paramountcy was being deliberately planned in London. Light is thrown on this strategy by a Colonial Office minute of May 1875 relating, as it happens, not to Africa but to the Pacific: 'Further annexations will come at the proper time; but to tell the world (Germany, United States, France etc.) that we *now* contemplate it would be to defeat the object and prevent us from quietly acquiring paramount influence among the Islands.'²⁴ This 'object' was evidently the development of a British 'Monroe Doctrine' for the South Pacific; and eighteen months later, in December 1876, Carnarvon explicitly extended this project to Africa. Rival powers, he declared, were unwelcome

²² N. Etherington, 'Frederic Elton and the South African Factor in the making of Britain's East African Empire', in *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 9 (1981), pp. 255-74. Hargreaves, *Prelude*, p. 192, citing memorandum by Benoît d'Azy (*Directeur des Colonies*), 19 Feb. 1876.

²³ e.g. on the Cameroons, Granville to Malet, 20 and 21 Jan. 1885: printed R. J. Gavin and J. A. Betley (eds.), *The Scramble for Africa: Documents on the Berlin West African Conference and Related Subjects, 1884/85*, Ibadan 1973,

pp. 105-8. On East Africa, Malet (Berlin) to Hatzfeldt, 16 Jan. and 20 Feb. 1885, cited in H. P. Meritt, 'Bismarck and the German Interest in East Africa', in *Historical Journal*, 21 (1978), pp. 97-116, at pp. 111-12. This tone is absent in communications to Paris. Evidently the French, as Britain's secular rivals overseas, were not expected to act like 'gentlemen'!

²⁴ R. Herbert (Permanent Under-Secretary), 5 May 1875, cited in McIntyre, *Imperial Frontier*, p. 369.

anywhere near the Transvaal, 'which *must* be ours'; or 'too near to Egypt and the country that belongs to Egypt'. 'We cannot admit rivals in the east or even in the central part of Africa [and] to a considerable extent, if not entirely, we must be prepared to apply a sort of Munro [*sic*] doctrine to much of Africa.'²⁵ In May 1877 Robert Morier, the British Minister at Lisbon, responded to Lord Derby's request of early 1876 for an investigation and reconsideration of British policy towards Portugal on the maritime Congo. Morier proposed that London should recognize a Portuguese title at the Congo mouth and at the same time 'coax' Portugal into becoming, in Africa, a British client-state with functions similar to those of Egypt and Zanzibar. This would, as Morier pointed out, do more than merely solve the Congo problem. It would be an insurance against the possible acquisition of the Portuguese colonies by 'young and ambitious states . . . like Germany and Italy'; and it would enable Britain 'to exercise a paramount influence' virtually throughout Africa.²⁶

At first sight these projects seem to reflect an unbounded confidence in British ability to 'keep all others out' simply by deploying paramountcy as a means of extending and perpetuating informal empire. It seems to have been assumed that once a British 'sphere of paramountcy' had been established in practice, other powers would accept its existence without much fuss and without scrutiny of its very dubious legal credentials. Yet Morier and Carnarvon (whose 'Munro doctrine' statement was prompted by the early attempts of Leopold II to reach the Congo basin from the *East* African coast) were evidently haunted by forebodings that the days of almost effortless British preponderance were numbered; and that serious competition was soon to be expected from 'young and ambitious states' as well as from the secular rival France. The systematic extension of paramountcy was to this extent a defensive strategy, directed to the forestalling of inconvenient annexations by other powers.

It is however very doubtful whether in 1877 these forebodings were shared, or this strategy consciously adopted, by the Foreign Office. If it was in fact adopted, it was very ephemeral, surviving for less than a year. Lord Derby, whose dislike of clear decisions was notorious, seems to have treated Morier's 1877 Congo proposals simply as interesting speculations on a matter of no urgency. He neither approved nor disapproved; he remained silent. This attitude of complete reserve did indeed permit Morier to use other current and pending negotiations with Lisbon as stepping-stones towards a Congo settlement and the ultimate extension of British paramountcy through Portuguese agency. In London, however, any systematic attempt to create a pan-African paramountcy had been abandoned early in 1878, when Lord Carnarvon resigned from the Colonial Office and Derby was replaced at the Foreign Office by Lord Salisbury, who actively discouraged 'forward policies' in Africa in the interest of good relations with France.

Nevertheless, right down to 1884 some British policy-makers found it hard to break the habit of regarding regions not occupied by another European power as *ipso facto* part of Britain's informal empire. In May 1884 Lord Derby (now, having defected to the Liberals, Gladstone's Colonial Secretary) publicly declared that 'we had claimed a sort of general right to exclude foreign powers from [the] coast' of South West Africa; and in September one of his officials minuted that if the German intervention had been

²⁵ Carnarvon to Bartle Frere, 12 Dec. 1876, cited in Etherington, 'Frederic Elton', p. 267.

²⁶ Morier to Derby, 15 May 1877, cited in Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, pp. 84-6.

foreseen, 'Great Britain, as the paramount Power, would have annexed [South West Africa] long ago'.²⁷ Bismarck summed up the British attitude, caustically but not unfairly, in a conversation of September 1884 with the French ambassador Alphonse de Courcel:

Les Anglais sont portés à croire que toutes les parties du globe terrestre qui n'ont pas été occupées déjà par une autre nation, leur appartiennent en vertu d'un droit de dévolution légale, et que c'est leur faire tort que de prendre place à côté d'eux sur les rivages des continents libres . . . Il est d'un intérêt commun de faire cesser cette illusion.²⁸

Yet Lord Salisbury, as Foreign Secretary from April 1878 to April 1880, had regarded the power-balance in the Levant and the Near East as immeasurably more important than empire in tropical Africa, whether formal or informal. During and after the Near Eastern Crisis of 1877-8, France became the crucial factor in this balance; and therefore in Salisbury's eyes 'the Power with whom more than any other it is the interest of this country to live on terms of friendship'.²⁹ He was therefore intensely anxious not to alarm or irritate the French by aggressive 'forward policies' in Africa. But Salisbury was unable instantly to reverse the trend of British policy. In Zululand the Cabinet failed to control the aggressive initiative of Shepstone and Frere, with spectacularly disastrous short-term results at Isandhlwana in January 1879. On the Guinea coast, nothing nearly so dramatic occurred; but the confused territorial situation in some localities, and the belief in more Customs houses as a remedy for falling revenues, encouraged small-scale competitive annexations in which British officials sometimes took the initiative and at which the Colonial Office was inclined to connive. Not until early 1880 did Salisbury succeed in curbing the activities of these 'insufferable proconsuls'.³⁰

In a period of acute trade depression British 'proconsuls' in West Africa also attempted to boost their failing revenues by sending into the interior semi-official African messengers with the mission of stimulating a more active trade with the coast. There was nothing new in this technique; it had been practised extensively in the early 1870s. But a decade later the French reaction to it was new. These exercises, combined with the coastal fidgetings of the British, convinced an increasing number of French policy-makers that there existed a British master-plan, not only for wholesale annexations on the coast, but for the forestalling of France in the basin of the upper Niger.³¹ This fear had been misconceived even in Lord Carnarvon's heyday; by the early 1880s, with Gladstone in office, it was totally unfounded. Nevertheless, it is difficult to exaggerate the effect of this *idée fixe* in stimulating the French to action.

In fact, by 1880 the only survivor of the expansionist British policies of the mid-1870s was Morier's 1877 scheme for the enrolment of Portugal as a British client-state. But it was a pretty feeble survivor. Morier had originally suggested that Portuguese sovereignty

²⁷ Derby to 'a delegation of South African merchants', 16 May 1884: cited in W. O. Aydelotte, *Bismarck and British Colonial Policy*, Philadelphia 1937, p. 65. E. A. Fairfield, minute on Robinson to Derby, 18 Aug. 1884, cited in C. W. De Kiewiet, *The Imperial Factor in South Africa*, Cambridge 1937, p. 114.

²⁸ *Documents diplomatiques français*, 1st series, 1871-1900, 16 vols., Paris 1929-59, vol. 5, no. 407, Courcel (Berlin) to Ferry, 23 Sept. 1884.

²⁹ Salisbury to CO, 29 Nov. 1879, cited in Hargreaves, *Prelude*, p. 213.

³⁰ Salisbury to Lyons (Paris), 12 Nov. 1879, cited in Hargreaves, *Prelude*, pp. 231-2. Documents printed in Newbury, *West Africa, 1875-1914*, pp. 166-73, especially 173; Salisbury to CO, 29 Jan. 1880, in which Salisbury refuses to assent to further annexations 'except under specific instructions in each case from the Cabinet'.

³¹ Hargreaves, *Prelude*, pp. 146-9, 192, 244-7.

should be recognized on the south bank only of the maritime Congo; on the north bank Portugal would cede her claim to Britain. This was not a bargain likely to appeal to Lisbon; Morier therefore proposed to sweeten it by mutually advantageous customs and railway-construction agreements relating to Goa and British India and to Mozambique and the temporarily British Transvaal. Although these arrangements, especially that relating to Goa, did offer some genuine economic advantages to Portugal, Morier greatly overrated their attractiveness as 'bait'. Many Portuguese policy-makers felt that the prospective domination of their colonies by British capital was too high a price to pay for economic development. Moreover, the two principal Portuguese political parties were beginning to exploit colonial issues as a means of mobilizing popular support. Each accused the other of conniving at British encroachments on Portuguese sovereignty and interests overseas, 'inaugurant ainsi . . . une politique de surenchère nationaliste du plus mauvais aloi'. Morier therefore found it much harder than he had imagined to 'coax [Portugal] into the way that she should go'. The Goa treaty, concluded in December 1878, was indeed ratified—though not without difficulty—in August 1879. But the Portuguese Cortes procrastinated interminably in its ratification of the Mozambique treaty, concluded in May 1879.³²

By 1880 there had been intermittent discussions of the Congo question between Morier and the Portuguese; but no formal negotiations, for Morier and the Foreign Office concurred in insisting that these could not begin until the Mozambique treaty had been ratified. In 1877, Lord Derby had been able to avoid giving Morier any instructions at all on his Congo proposals. The development of the Goa and Mozambique negotiations in the course of 1878–9 made it impossible for Derby's successor Lord Salisbury to maintain this complete and non-committal reserve. Lord Salisbury's Congo instructions to Morier were dilatory, inadequate, and ambiguous. This very uncharacteristic incompetence on Salisbury's part may well have been deliberate, a strategy to avoid alarming the French by a forward policy on the Congo, without offending either the Portuguese or—hardly less important—Sir Robert Morier, by refusing to negotiate at all. However this may be, in May 1880 the Permanent Under-Secretary had to confess to Lord Granville, the incoming Liberal Foreign Secretary, that 'this [Congo] affair is evidently in a dreadful mess'.³³

Granville was content to confirm Salisbury's general position: that the Mozambique treaty must be ratified before a Congo negotiation could begin. But in April 1881, with the Mozambique treaty still unratified by the Portuguese Upper House, Morier suddenly proposed a radical change of policy. He now suggested that Portuguese sovereignty should be recognized on *both* banks of the maritime Congo, subject to appropriate guarantees, to be policed by an Anglo-Portuguese commission, for freedom of trade and navigation; and that Lisbon should be offered an immediate negotiation on these lines, as an incentive to the ratification of the Mozambique treaty. The Foreign Office at once objected that Portugal had done nothing to deserve 'a sop in the shape of a Congo treaty'; and Granville thereupon decided to abandon the Congo discussions

³² Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, pp. 84–95, citing Morier, memorandum, 17 Aug. 1877. Latour da Veiga Pinto, *Le Portugal et le Congo*, pp. 128–48, 299.

³³ Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, pp. 90–5, citing Lord Tenterden (Permanent Under-Secretary), minute,

24 May 1880. In 1878 Salisbury resorted to even more devious tactics in his anxiety to curb 'forward policies' in East Africa: cf. R. Oliver and G. Mathew (eds.), *History of East Africa*, 2 vols., Oxford 1963, vol. 1, pp. 360–1.

completely, instructing Morier to take no further action 'in . . . the Congo question'.³⁴ Yet eighteen months later, in November 1882, Morier's rejected proposal was to be hastily resurrected, with Granville's approval, as a riposte to the establishment of France in the Congo basin.

By 1882 the greatly improved international situation of France since the Near Eastern crisis and the 1878 Berlin Congress had enabled a group of imperially minded French statesmen to make considerable progress in launching a major challenge to the previously overwhelming preponderance of Britain in Africa. In 1879 the decision had been taken to create, by peaceful penetration if possible but by military conquest if necessary, an extensive territorial empire in the Senegal hinterland and the upper Niger basin.³⁵ In November 1880, during Jules Ferry's first ministry, the Quai d'Orsay let it be known that the demands of metropolitan security no longer constrained France to 'remain aloof from the movement of European rivalry in Africa'.³⁶ The principal enthusiasts for colonial expansion—Ferry, Charles de Freycinet, Léon Gambetta, Admiral Jean Jauréguiberry, Maurice Rouvier—differed in their individual motivations. But they were all convinced that France need not, and should not, continue to accept her rather undistinguished second place to Britain as an imperial and oceanic power; and they all shared the fear that unless France acted quickly and decisively, she would be cheated of her opportunity by preclusive British annexation both in West Africa and elsewhere. When in January 1881 the Sierra Leone administration attempted to stimulate trade with the interior by a mission led by a British official (and not, as previously, merely an African 'political messenger'), this was seen, not only in Senegal but in Paris, as conclusive proof of British designs upon the upper Niger basin. In February 1881 Jauréguiberry warned the French Senate: 'Nous avons des rivaux, des rivaux acharnés, qui luttent constamment contre l'influence que nous exerçons déjà au Sénégal. Ils cherchent à nous contrarier par tous les moyens.'³⁷

In Madagascar, the French took prompt and decisive action to avoid being stalled. The British patronage of the Hovas was intensely resented in Paris; and it was felt that London treated France as a negligible quantity not only in Madagascar but in the Indian Ocean generally. A British naval visit to Madagascar in support of the Hovas in July 1881 was seen as an attempt finally to extinguish all French influence in the island, probably as a prelude to the introduction of a more formal British control. The French riposted by a diplomatic offensive against the Hovas which in little more than a year (September 1881–December 1882) completely destroyed British preponderance in Madagascar; and which was followed by French naval action early in 1883.³⁸

³⁴ Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, pp. 95–8, citing Morier to FO, 3 Apr. 1881 and minute (n.d.) by J. Pauncefote; same to same, 20 Apr.; Granville to Morier, 30 Apr. 1881.

³⁵ C. W. Newbury and A. S. Kanya-Forstner, 'French Policy and the Origins of the Scramble for West Africa', in *Journal of African History*, 10 (1969), pp. 253–76. A. S. Kanya-Forstner, *The Conquest of the Western Sudan: A Study in French Military Imperialism*, Cambridge 1969, pp. 55–112.

³⁶ Cited J. P. T. Bury, 'Gambetta and Overseas Problems', in *English Historical Review*, 82 (1967), pp. 277–95, at p. 286.

³⁷ Brunshwig, 'Anglophobia'; Sanderson, 'European Partition', pp. 6–9, 12–14, 23–7. Hargreaves, *Prelude*, pp. 257–9, 265–71, 290. Newbury and Kanya-Forstner, 'French Policy', citing Jauréguiberry, at p. 268.

³⁸ Swinburne, 'Influence of Madagascar', pp. 17–29, 92–121, 171–81, 195.

Far from being about to forestall the French, the British were in the early 1880s very hesitant and confused in their response to French erosion of their informal empire. British preponderance in Africa had been for so long unchallenged, apart from very small-scale French competition here and there on the Guinea coast, that it had come to be regarded in London almost as a 'law of nature'; and it was some time before British policy-makers recognized that the unthinkable was happening. As late as August 1880 they were still refusing to take seriously the French advance from Senegal into the Niger basin.³⁹ But in the course of 1881 it became impossible to ignore the scale of the challenge: military conquest or exclusive commercial treaties in the upper Niger basin; new French protectorates or exclusive treaties on the coast; massive commercial penetration into the lower Niger, previously an exclusively British preserve; the diplomatic offensive against the Madagascar Hovas.

Even when the threat had been recognized, London still had great difficulty in devising a counter-strategy: there was, for instance, no serious resistance to the French take-over in Madagascar.⁴⁰ In West Africa, the Colonial Office persistently rejected the option of converting informal into formal empire. For Gladstone's government, the usual financial objections to 'unprofitable' and 'burdensome' possessions were reinforced by an extremely powerful political inhibition. The Liberals had won the 1880 election on a platform of impassioned rejection of the aggressively annexationist imperialism attributed to Disraeli. Underlying this commitment to imperial self-denial was the tacit assumption that informal empire would continue to exist. By 1881 informal empire was visibly crumbling; but the sudden adoption of a policy of annexation was politically impossible.

Other expedients were therefore attempted. Since the 1860s the British had concluded numerous treaties of 'trade and friendship' with African rulers on the Guinea coast, and a few with rulers in the interior. They even paid a stipend (which had unfortunately been allowed to fall into arrears) to the Alimamis of Futa Jallon. These treaties usually bound their African signatories not to conclude treaties with other powers without British consent. Steps were therefore taken to remind these rulers of their obligations. But these local treaties had never been recognized by other European powers. In May 1883 Villiers Lister of the Foreign Office pointed out—rather late in the day—that treaties of trade and friendship were 'totally valueless' against the imposition of 'a hostile protectorate'.⁴¹ Lister could have said the same about extra-territorial jurisdiction, with its explicit repudiation of sovereignty.

Many of the recent French treaties both on the coast and in the interior seemed, by their explicit reservation of all commercial activity to France, to embody a revival of a 'régime de l'exclusif' much more restrictive than the existing commercial system at Senegal, which was discriminatory but by no means prohibitive. In fact, the average

³⁹ Hargreaves, *Prelude*, p. 265, citing minute by Lord Kimberley (Colonial Secretary), Aug. 1880.

⁴⁰ However, Madagascar may have been more or less deliberately sacrificed to the real or supposed imperatives of Anglo-French relations in Egypt. Until the summer of 1882 the FO may have avoided confrontation lest it jeopardize concerted action in Egypt; thereafter in the hope that Madagascar would console the French for the British occupation. From October 1882 the Queen

protested vigorously, but vainly, at the 'humiliating' failure of her Liberal ministers to take effective action on Madagascar. See A. C. Benson, Viscount Esher, and G. Earle Buckle (eds.), *Letters of Queen Victoria: A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence between the Years 1837 and 1901*, 9 vols., London 1911-32, vol. 3, London 1928.

⁴¹ Hargreaves, *Prelude*, pp. 148, 247. Lister to Herbert (CO), 22 May 1883: printed Newbury, *West Africa 1875-1914*, pp. 177-8.

rate of import duties at Senegal was about 25 per cent lower than similar duties at British possessions; and, except for 'guinea-cloths', the Senegal duties did not discriminate by country of origin. It was however no secret that French bureaucrats and French manufacturers were anxious to extend the scope of discriminatory duties and to increase them to prohibitive levels. Moreover, restrictions on shipping, both at Senegal and increasingly at other French possessions, were already severely discriminatory. Foreign vessels could trade only at specified ports, which did not usually include river-ports; they were excluded from the coasting trade; at the permitted ports they had to purchase their *droits et actes de francisation* and then pay accostage dues double those levied on French vessels.⁴²

In May 1881 the Foreign Office, disturbed by the increasingly restrictive trend of French policy, offered to cede the Isles de Los (off Konakry) in return for 'equal commercial rights'—completely non-discriminatory import duties and navigational access—from Senegal to Sierra Leone inclusive. Under such a régime British goods and British traders would probably have dominated the market even in the French possessions—as they already did at Libreville in Gabon, where in the early 1840s London had insisted on completely free trade before recognizing the French title. In this way the British would escape the dreaded necessity of acquiring new possessions of their own. But the French were not to be caught on this hook, even when baited with the Isles de Los. They objected to the exorbitant British duties on tobacco, wines, and spirits: allegedly up to 200 per cent on brandy at Lagos. Free trade principles did not of course permit these duties to discriminate by country of origin; but in practice, as the French complained, they fell mainly on 'les marchandises de provenance plus spécialement française'. But Paris was in any case unwilling to derogate from French fiscal sovereignty by concluding any commercial agreement 'ayant un caractère définitif et perpétuel'; and of course nothing less would have satisfied the British.⁴³

While these expedients were proving their futility, the French pressure was increasing. By the end of 1881 Villiers Lister feared that French commercial penetration of the lower Niger might soon be followed by an overtly political initiative. In January 1882 he prompted a proposal to the Colonial Office that British protectorates should be established on the 'Oil Rivers' (the Niger delta) and in the Cameroons. Lord Kimberley (Colonial Secretary, 1880–2) immediately suspected that the Foreign Office was merely attempting 'to hand over to us the troublesome duty of managing our relations with the Oil Rivers'—which were of course still juridically foreign territory. On 6 April 1882 he decisively rejected the Foreign Office proposal: 'Such an extensive protectorate . . . would be a most serious addition to our burdens and responsibilities. The coast is pestilential; the natives numerous and unmanageable.' There would inevitably be 'wars with the natives [and] heavy demands upon the British taxpayer'.⁴⁴

⁴² Hargreaves, *Prelude*, pp. 251, 261, 268–71. A. W. L. Hemming (CO), minute on tariff equalization, 17 Nov. 1879; J. A. Crowe (commercial attaché, Paris), note on French differential tariffs, 20 June 1884: printed Newbury, *West Africa 1875–1914*, pp. 428–9, 431–4. C. W. Newbury, 'The Tariff Factor in Anglo-French West African Partition', in Gifford and Louis, *France and Britain*, pp. 221–59, 224–31.

⁴³ Newbury, 'Tariff Factor', pp. 225–7, 231–4, citing

Victor Régis to Ministry of Commerce, 21 Nov. 1875; Waddington to Lyons (Paris), 24 Mar. 1879; Admiral Pothuau (French Ambassador) to Salisbury, 30 Oct. 1879; Admiral Cloué (*Marine et Colonies*) to St. Hilaire (Foreign Minister), 25 May 1881.

⁴⁴ Hargreaves, *Prelude*, pp. 303–6. Minute by Kimberley, 6 Apr. 1882, cited in Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians*, p. 165.

By April 1882 the French were not only intensifying their commercial activities on the lower Niger but were also, it appeared, establishing themselves politically in a completely new sphere—the Congo basin. As early as June 1881 the Foreign Office had learned from British Baptist missionaries on the Congo that in September 1880 Brazza had concluded treaties with the Congolese ruler Makoko. Makoko's country adjoined Stanley Pool, and was cut off from the maritime Congo by some 200 miles of unnavigable falls and rapids; but Lister had minuted, 'This is serious if true.' In March 1882 the Foreign Office received, through the same missionary channel, a copy of Brazza's principal treaty, whereby Makoko had 'fait . . . cession de son territoire à la France'.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, repeated enquiries to Paris failed to elicit any information. Ironically, Brazza's exploits, from which so many momentous consequences were to flow, stemmed not from any official French search for empire, but from the explorer's personal initiative. Neither the Quai d'Orsay nor the *Marine et Colonies* had entrusted him with a 'mission'; and he had no authority whatever to conclude treaties of any kind. Until Brazza had returned to France in June 1882 the Quai d'Orsay had no authentic knowledge of his proceedings; and therefore, quite genuinely, no reliable information for communication to London.⁴⁶

However, even after Brazza's return, Paris was in no hurry to reply to the British enquiries. Not until 25 October was London told that his treaties were being 'studied'; in fact, the decision to ratify had already been taken on the 10th. Ratification, by a *loi* and not merely by the more usual *décret*, followed on 21 November. Charles Duclerc, the French Premier, did not however regard the ratification as an anti-British move, still less as 'retaliation' for the British occupation of Egypt. He saw it rather as a politically useful response to the popular hero-worship of Brazza in France. True, H. M. Stanley, Brazza's hated rival, was an 'Anglo-Saxon'—and therefore a convenient lightning-conductor for French anglophobia. But Stanley was in the service of King Leopold II's *Association Internationale du Congo*, not in that of Britain. The AIC, with its obscure and 'nondescript' status, was evidently not a state with internationally recognized rights. Diplomatically, ratification as a riposte to King Leopold's encroachments and intrigues seemed a completely safe and harmless move. Maurice Rouvier, who acted as *rapporteur* for the *loi*, was at pains to assure the Chamber that it could not possibly lead to international complications.⁴⁷

Rouvier also gave assurances, intended for the British, that 'notre organisation coloniale, éminemment libérale, assure au commerce de toutes les nations la même liberté, les mêmes avantages, qu'à notre propre commerce'. But the failed tariff negotiation of 1881 had taught the Foreign Office the wide difference between the British and the French conceptions of a 'liberal organization' in matters of commerce. Lister in particular saw the French as a major economic menace: '[They] are jealous and bad colonists, they oppress the natives, repel foreign capitalists and have to fall back upon slavery, thinly disguised, for the labour required on their plantations. They are monopolists and protectionists, and judge all other nations by their own standards.'⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, pp. 100–1. H. Brunswick, *L'Avènement de l'Afrique noire*, Paris 1963, pp. 143–53, 161–3, printing (pp. 147–8) Brazza's treaties.

⁴⁶ Brunswick, *Avènement*, pp. 143–6, 149–53, citing

Jauréguiberry to Freycinet, 27 June, 17 July, 26 Sept. 1882.

⁴⁷ Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, p. 101. Brunswick, *Avènement*, pp. 155–62.

⁴⁸ Rouvier to the *Chambre*, 21 Nov. 1882: cited in

Not least because of the prolonged silence of Paris about Brazza's proceedings, it was natural to suspect the existence of a concerted French plan to impose their detestable monopolistic protectionism upon both the lower Niger and the lower Congo, the two greatest arteries of European trade in West Africa. Kimberley's veto had frustrated Lister's attempt to forestall a French coup on the Niger: it was therefore all the more important to keep them out of the maritime Congo. Early in November 1882, before Brazza's treaties had actually been ratified, Lister proposed the revival of the scheme that Morier had put forward and Granville had rejected in April 1881: recognition of Portuguese sovereignty on the maritime Congo, subject to effective guarantees of commercial and religious freedom. Granville now approved this project; by November 1882 the Congo problem seemed to have an urgency which had been entirely lacking eighteen months earlier.⁴⁹

In January 1876 Lister had minuted that 'it is far better to have to deal with the worst savages than with the best-intentioned Portuguese'.⁵⁰ But by 1882 his alarm at the ubiquitous French had evidently overcome his aversion from the Portuguese, who at least had the virtue of being—supposedly—easy to manipulate. Lister's strategy had obvious attractions: no direct political or administrative responsibility; no burden on the taxpayer; no problem with the Colonial Office veto on new protectorates. In so far as British policy in Africa had any 'general objective' other than the maintenance of informal empire, it was the creation of complete freedom of commerce and navigation on all the great African rivers. Moreover, the use of a client-state as an obstacle to other powers was a comfortingly traditional expedient. It had worked admirably in the heyday of informal empire: perhaps it would still be effective in shoring up a tottering system.⁵¹

But this seductive prospect concealed some dangerous pitfalls. The commercial and other interests which the proposed treaty purported to safeguard had not been consulted; and the Foreign Office was evidently taken aback by their strong and politically embarrassing opposition to the prospect of Portugal as caretaker. The rapid development of European rivalries in Africa emphasized the importance of a speedy settlement; but in spite of Morier's frustrating experience with the Mozambique ratification, the Foreign Office did not foresee the tenacity of Portuguese resistance to the conditions that it imposed. It can hardly have anticipated that the treaty would not be concluded until 26 February 1884. It seems doubtful, too, whether Granville and Lister had fully considered some of the broader implications of their strategy. The French claims related exclusively to the upper Congo; it was in 1882 still quite uncertain whether Paris also had territorial ambitions on the lower, maritime Congo. But if such ambitions did exist, France was hardly likely to renounce them by recognizing Portuguese sovereignty merely because Britain had done so. But if—as seems very probable—Paris had in 1882 no immediate designs upon the lower Congo, the spectacle of a protracted Anglo-Portuguese negotiation, with its point so obviously against France, might well stimulate the very ambitions that Lister feared.

Brunschwig, *Avènement*, p. 162. Minute by Lister, 13 Mar. 1884, cited in R. Louis, 'The Berlin Congo Conference', in Gifford and Louis, *France and Britain*, pp. 167–220, at p. 188. It seems clear that Lister already held similar views in Nov. 1882.

⁴⁹ Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, pp. 101, 104–5.

⁵⁰ Minute by Lister, 29 Jan. 1876: cited Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, p. 54.

⁵¹ Cf. Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, pp. 101–4.

The negotiation had in fact precisely this effect; and not only on the maritime Congo but even to some extent on the upper Congo too. In October and November 1882 Duclerc had seen the ratification of Brazza's treaties as little more than an exercise in public relations. Jauréguiberry at the *Marine* had wanted no action at all: he strongly disapproved of Brazza's exploits as a mere distraction from his own schemes of expansion on the Guinea coast and the lower Niger. But when early in January 1883 Duclerc learned of 'la reprise inopinée des pourparlers entre le Portugal et l'Angleterre', he peremptorily overrode Jauréguiberry's orders forbidding further territorial acquisition on the Congo and demanded the immediate consolidation of the French position at Stanley Pool. As for the maritime Congo, before the end of 1883 Jules Ferry was planning to frustrate the British by acquiring its north bank for France; and he had convinced himself that Lisbon would make this concession if pressed a little. He therefore regarded the conclusion of the Anglo-Portuguese treaty in February 1884 as not only highly objectionable in itself, but as 'une véritable trahison'.⁵²

Initially, Lister seems to have given little thought to the problem of the recognition of the treaty by other powers. Britain had been the sole active opponent of Portugal at the Congo mouth; if she now chose to withdraw her opposition, why should others object? The Portuguese flattered themselves that their sovereignty on the maritime Congo had already been recognized by both France and Germany; but on this London soon ceased to share Lisbon's confidence, if indeed it had ever done so. In February 1883 conduct of the negotiation was taken over from Lister by Percy Anderson, the newly appointed head of the Foreign Office Africa Department. Anderson at once saw that the treaty would be worthless to both Britain and Portugal unless accepted by other powers; and that to stand any chance of such acceptance it would have to contain completely credible guarantees of absolute commercial freedom for traders of all nationalities. To provide these guarantees, and in the hope of appeasing the already vociferous British opponents of the negotiation, Anderson radically revised the draft treaty. He wrote into it much more detailed and comprehensive safeguards for commercial and religious freedom, including provision for the establishment of an international commission to police the navigation and commerce of the maritime Congo. These safeguards became doubly indispensable when in April 1883 very strong pressure in the House of Commons constrained Gladstone to promise to submit the treaty to Parliament before ratification.⁵³

Twelve months were consumed in overcoming Portuguese resistance to the more rigorous conditions now demanded by London. But so far as other powers were concerned, the effect of these detailed safeguards was largely thrown away when at the last moment, as compensation for the numerous Portuguese concessions and as a sop to Portuguese self-esteem, London agreed to replace the proposed international commission by an Anglo-Portuguese commission. Under this arrangement 'absolute commercial freedom' was not a credible prospect to the French, who were confirmed in their view that the treaty was merely a stratagem to exclude France from the maritime

⁵² Brunschwig, *Avènement*, pp. 149-52, 154-9, 162-5, citing: Jauréguiberry, 27 June, 17 July, 26 Sept. 1882; Jauréguiberry to Cordier, 22 Nov. 1882; Duclerc to Jauréguiberry, 3 Jan. 1883. Latour da Veiga Pinto, *Le Portugal et le Congo*, pp. 178-83, 212-18.

⁵³ Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, pp. 106-12, 130-7,

139-44, 165-6. Latour da Veiga Pinto, *Le Portugal et le Congo*, pp. 102-4, 155-9, 168-9, 178, 236-7. For Anderson's more rigorous conditions cf. Granville to d'Antas, 15 Mar. 1883; printed Gavin and Betley, *Scramble for Africa*, pp. 2-5.

Congo; and from whom the Anglo-Portuguese commission merely emphasized the role of Portugal as a British cat's-paw.⁵⁴

Nor were the fiscal provisions of the treaty satisfactory to other powers. In March 1883 London had warned Lisbon that 'it would be impossible . . . to agree to the imposition of burdens which do not now exist'. But this condition could not possibly be met. According to the Foreign Office, European traders on the Congo paid 'no dues or imposts, making only insignificant payments to native chiefs'. The financial needs of any European administration, whether Portugal or other, would necessarily generate a new 'burden' of 'dues and imposts'. In fact, the treaty authorized the application on the Congo of the 'liberal' Mozambique tariff of 1877: 6 per cent on hardware and 10 per cent on textiles, but much heavier specific duties on tobacco, arms, and alcohol. Although this tariff did not discriminate by country of origin, its 'burden' would fall, like the notorious Lagos tariff and as Frenchmen and Germans were quick to point out, especially heavily on goods of non-British origin. But even British merchants and manufacturers protested that this tariff would be intolerably burdensome if administered by Portugal. Portuguese Customs regulations were notoriously complex and labyrinthine: as the Manchester Chamber of Commerce noted, the Mozambique tariff embodied 'eighty-five Articles and about thirty sub-sections to Articles'. Equally notoriously, Portuguese officials exploited this impenetrable bureaucratic maze by levying 'illegal exactions' as the price of escape from it. British commercial interests simply did not believe that this 'yoke on the neck of every merchant and manufacturer' would be appreciably alleviated by a mere treaty, or even by an Anglo-Portuguese supervisory commission.⁵⁵

In Britain, the public opposition against the Anglo-Portuguese negotiation and treaty was orchestrated mainly by the Manchester merchant J. F. Hutton acting especially through the Manchester Chamber of Commerce within which he was very influential. It is well known that Hutton and his associates Mackinnon and Kirk collaborated closely with Leopold II to safeguard the future of the *Association Internationale du Congo*, from which they hoped to obtain lucrative concessions. But until June 1884 Hutton carefully refrained from campaigning openly on behalf of the AIC.⁵⁶ His proclaimed objective was merely the preservation of the status quo on the maritime Congo where, under the benign aegis of 'independent African chiefs', there had been a spectacular expansion of trade since Commodore Hewett's suppression of piracy in 1875. This trade, which gave every promise of further growth, would it was asserted be damaged by the imposition of any European administration; and completely ruined by

⁵⁴ Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, p. 145. Latour da Veiga Pinto, *Le Portugal et le Congo*, pp. 182-3, 209, 212-13. S. E. Crowe, *The Berlin West African Conference, 1884-1885*, London 1942, pp. 23-5. *Ddf*, vol. 5, nos. 210, Laboulaye (Lisbon) to Ferry, 28 Feb. 1884; 214, Waddington (London) to Ferry, 4 Mar.; 218, Laboulaye to Ferry, 12 Mar.; 226, Ferry to Courcel (Berlin), 31 Mar. 1884. The international commission smacked too strongly of the arrangements sometimes imposed upon non-European states; hence the extreme Portuguese sensitivity.

⁵⁵ Granville to d'Antas, 15 Mar. 1883; FO to Manchester Chamber of Commerce, 21 Mar. 1884; Manchester Ch. of Comm. to FO, 6 Mar. 1884;

Bismarck to Münster (London), 7 June 1884 (English translation from C.4205): all printed Gavin and Betley, *Scramble for Africa*, pp. 2-5, 14-16, 9-14, 26-7. H.-U. Wehler, *Bismarck und der Imperialismus*, Cologne 1969, 3rd edn., 1972, pp. 376-9. *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 226, as above. Anglo-Portuguese Treaty (printed Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, pp. 241-6), Article 9. Jacob Bright (MP for Manchester), speech in the Commons, 3 Apr. 1883.

⁵⁶ 'Behind-the-scenes' lobbying in favour of the AIC at Whitehall and Westminster (in which Mackinnon and Kirk played major parts) had of course begun much earlier; by February 1883 it had already developed into a concerted campaign.

a Portuguese administration.⁵⁷ This argument had at least some factual basis: between 1876 and 1883 British exports to the Congo had multiplied threefold, but for much of this period trade with Portuguese possessions had been depressed and fluctuating.⁵⁸

Support for Hutton's campaign, both from Chambers of Commerce and from individual firms interested in the Congo, was so enthusiastic and widespread that Hutton can hardly have artificially 'manufactured' it, however skilfully he may have manipulated it. British businessmen evidently did not need much convincing that their interests would be damaged by a Portuguese administration. Although on the Congo itself the Dutch were considerably more active than the British as traders,⁵⁹ British interests were nevertheless important. There was a flourishing, though not precisely quantifiable, *indirect* British export trade to the Congo through continental *entrepôts* at Antwerp, Hamburg, and Le Havre. In 1879 over 60 per cent of the Dutch Congo company's trade-goods were of British origin. British-made textiles, produced 'à des prix défiant toute concurrence', virtually monopolized the Congo market. Most of the firearms exported seem to have been British. Contemporaries estimated that in the early 1880s British industry supplied between a half and three-quarters of all the goods exported to the Congo. Moreover, this trade was rapidly expanding. In 1884 the Quai d'Orsay estimated that direct and indirect British exports had increased in value from £250,000 in 1876 to £750,000 in 1883. There is broad agreement between this estimate and that of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, which in March 1884 valued current exports at 'approaching a million' a year, and the round trade with the Congo at 'not less than two million'.⁶⁰

The importance of indirect exports seems to shed light on the apparent indifference of Chambers of Commerce, usually reflecting the views of manufacturers and wholesalers, to the threat of a French take-over on the maritime Congo. Manufacturers and wholesalers cared little whether they sold their goods to British merchants or consigned them to Le Havre for re-export by French merchants. They probably saw the less cause for concern in that they had already penetrated the severely restricted Senegal market. 'Several old-established and wealthy firms in Liverpool, Manchester and London [specialized] in supplying the demand for British goods through French houses.' In 1880 *direct* British exports to French West Africa amounted to only £56,000. But over half of Senegal's £500,000 worth of imports consisted of foreign goods re-exported from France; and of the 339,000 guinea-cloths imported, over 99 per cent were of foreign manufacture, re-exported and 'carried in French bottoms'. The great bulk of these 'foreign' goods, and virtually all the guinea-cloths, must surely have been British.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, pp. 116-20: memorials of the Chambers of Commerce of Manchester and other cities, November 1882-April 1883. Only the London Chamber suggested 'confederating and bestowing power upon the various stations already established on the Congo under a neutral flag'.

⁵⁸ Table 10.1, 'British Trade with West Africa', above.

⁵⁹ H. L. Wesseling, 'The Netherlands and the Partition of Africa', in *Journal of African History*, 22 (1981), pp. 459-509.

⁶⁰ Latour da Veiga Pinto, *Le Portugal et le Congo*, pp. 80-1, citing *Mémoires et Documents Afrique* 89,

Mémoire sur la question du Congo, 1884. Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, pp. 30-3, citing various British estimates. Both authors, and their sources, emphasize the importance of British indirect exports. Sums expressed in francs have been converted at the rate: 25 fr = £1.

⁶¹ F. Holmwood (Consul, Zanzibar), memorandum, 6 May 1884: cited Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, p. 117. Appendix I, 'British Trade'. Crowe to Lyons, note on French differential tariffs, 20 June 1884: printed Newbury, *West Africa, 1875-1914*, pp. 431-4. Conversely, and in spite of the much-maligned Lagos tariff, British West African territories were almost as permeable to goods of non-British origin. Between 1875

It is less easy to understand the tenacious resistance to the Anglo-Portuguese treaty by British merchants and shipowners trading directly with the Congo. To all appearances, these groups had far more to lose from a French take-over, with its severe navigational restrictions, than from the installation of the Portuguese subject to the safeguards of a treaty. Even when trade with the Portuguese possessions had been at its most depressed they had been an incomparably better market for *direct* British exports than the French possessions; and in the early 1880s this market was beginning to expand.⁶² In 1882 and 1883 the merchants and shipowners may well have seen the French threat to the maritime Congo as remote and hypothetical; and have concluded that it was pointless to disrupt a flourishing trade by installing the Portuguese. But as late as March–April 1884 some firms trading directly with the Congo joined the Chambers of Commerce in opposing ratification of the treaty; and in continuing to insist that Britain should support the ‘sovereign and territorial rights’ of the Congo chiefs. The persistent opposition of these firms seems to reflect nothing more than their rather naïve belief (of which the Foreign Office attempted to disabuse them) that there was still a future for ‘sovereign and independent’ African chiefs on the maritime Congo. It was not until July 1884, when the French threat could no longer be ignored, that some of these firms began to support recognition of the AIC as a lesser evil than either France or Portugal.⁶³

In early 1884 the Chambers of Commerce were still, to the ill-concealed irritation of the Foreign Office, apparently unconcerned about the French. Anderson rebuked them for their blindness to ‘what is now passing in Africa’. The days of their beloved ‘independent African chiefs’ were clearly numbered. European control was not imminent; and it was therefore essential to insure against the establishment on the Congo of ‘Powers whose policy might not be consistently friendly to . . . British commercial interests’.⁶⁴ But the Chambers were still supporters of the ‘independent chiefs’, not of the AIC; and when in June 1884 Hutton began to throw off the mask and to campaign openly in support of the AIC their response was very disappointing. Even Manchester ultimately began to waver.⁶⁵ In March 1884, however, the language of the Manchester Chamber was much more openly and stridently anti-Portuguese than it had been at the outset of the campaign in November 1882. The influence of Hutton is doubtless relevant here; nevertheless, manufacturers and merchants genuinely believed that they had every reason to dread the effects of Portuguese administration. The apparently crippling effects of French protectionism had been, and could if necessary again be, greatly mitigated by the well-developed re-export trade. But Portuguese administration was believed to be severely damaging to *all* trade,

and 1884 goods of non-British manufacture (including such goods re-exported from the UK) averaged over 44 per cent by value of the imports into Lagos and the Gold Coast. Cf. Newbury, *West Africa*, Statistical Tables: Table III, ‘British Exports to West Africa’; Table V, ‘Imports into British West African Territories’. Merchants of all nationalities, in their eagerness to exert pressure upon the policy-makers, seem to have considerably exaggerated their difficulties.

⁶² Table 10.1, above.

⁶³ Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, pp. 153, 179. The

Liverpool firms organized themselves for this purpose as the Congo District Defence Association.

⁶⁴ Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, pp. 152–5. FO to Manchester Chamber of Commerce, 10 May 1884 (signed by Lord E. Fitzmaurice, Parliamentary Under-Secretary, but bearing every stylistic mark of Anderson’s drafting): printed Gavin and Betley, *Scramble for Africa*, p. 22.

⁶⁵ Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, pp. 173–82. By this time Leopold’s grant of the *droit de préemption* to France had become public knowledge; and news of the AIC’s commercially monopolistic treaties had begun to leak out.

irrespective of the channels through which it was conducted. There were complaints that Portuguese maladministration exasperated Africans so intensely that they became unwilling to trade with Europeans at all. Portuguese officials were seen as indigent and corrupt parasites who obstructed and victimized trade by using as a means of extortion an 'institutionalized' system of dilatory inefficiency and procedural quibbles, for which the complex formalities of Portuguese regulations afforded endless opportunities.⁶⁶

Nor were British commercial interests alone in their belief that neither a treaty nor a supervisory commission could in practice eliminate this chicanery. Dutch Chambers of Commerce, protesting against the treaty in 1884, were as hostile to the Portuguese as their British counterparts.⁶⁷ And when on 7 June 1884 Bismarck refused to recognize either the treaty or Portuguese sovereignty on the lower Congo, he thought it useful to devote much of his despatch to 'the present unfavourable opinion entertained by the commercial world of the Portuguese colonial officials'. He pointed out, very pertinently, that 'the way in which a control is exercised can always do more harm to commerce than high duties'. Germany 'shared the fear, which . . . has been expressed by merchants of all nations, that the action of Portuguese officials would be prejudicial to trade; and, precisely for this reason', could not consent to the handing-over of the Customs administration to Portuguese officials.⁶⁸ Bismarck's condemnation of the public officials of another power, in a diplomatic document destined for publication, was astonishingly harsh. But he was evidently confident that he was expressing a view that was very widely shared.

In Britain opposition to the treaty was by no means confined to 'the commercial world'. Humanitarians saw the Portuguese not merely as oppressors but as covert slave-traders; it was therefore easy enough for Hutton and his associates to persuade the Anti-Slavery Society to protest against the treaty.⁶⁹ The Portuguese scarcely troubled to conceal their distaste for Protestant missionary activities. Both of the British missions operating on the Congo were therefore opposed to the treaty, though only one of them, the Baptists, actively participated in Hutton's campaign of agitation against it. But a highly unfavourable stereotype of the Portuguese was not peculiar to disgruntled businessmen, scandalized humanitarians, and apprehensive missionaries. It was shared, and often expressed with supreme arrogance and withering contempt, by the British ruling élite. Palmerston had set the tone in the 1850s and 1860s by describing—and treating—Portugal as a 'half-civilised government'; he regarded the Portuguese as 'of all European nations, the lowest in the moral scale'. In the 1870s and 1880s similar views were being expressed, sometimes in even more scurrilous language, by Villiers Lister, Lord Carnarvon, and others.⁷⁰ Hutton's agitation against

⁶⁶ Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, p. 116, memorial of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, 13 Nov. 1882; 133-5, citing Jacob Bright's Commons speech, 3 Apr. 1883. Manchester Chamber of Commerce to FO, 6 Mar. 1884: printed Gavin and Betley, *Scramble for Africa*, pp. 9-14. Joseph Chamberlain, reported by Herbert v. Bismarck: *Große Politik*, vol. 4, no. 753, memorandum by H. v. Bismarck, 24 Sept. 1884.

⁶⁷ Wesseling, 'Netherlands and Partition', pp. 502-3.

⁶⁸ Bismarck to Münster, 7 June 1884: printed Gavin and Betley, *Scramble for Africa*, pp. 26-7.

⁶⁹ Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, pp. 123-5.

⁷⁰ 'These half-civilised governments such as those in China, Portugal and Spanish America . . . care little for

words and they must not only see the Stick but actually feel it on their Shoulders': Palmerston, cited C. Hibbert, *The Dragon Wakes: China and the West, 1793-1911*, London 1970, p. 210. Palmerston to Russell, 5 Oct. 1864: cited H. C. F. Bell, *Lord Palmerston*, 2 vols., London 1936, vol. 2, p. 411. Carnarvon thought Portugal 'a country which has done less for the . . . welfare of mankind than any with which I am acquainted': minute, 11 Apr. 1876, cited Etherington, 'Frederic Elton', p. 263. Jacob Bright's Commons speech of 3 Apr 1883 outraged Portuguese opinion by its comparison of Portugal with Turkey as a 'contemptible and bankrupt' country: Latour da Veiga Pinto, *Le Portugal et le Congo*, pp. 201-4.

the Anglo-Portuguese treaty was given a flying start by the profound distaste and contempt for Portugal that pervaded almost all articulate sections of British society.

The two British missions on the Congo, the Baptist Missionary Society and the Livingstone Inland Mission, had entered this field in 1878-9, when British informal empire on the Congo was still in full working order. They were well aware that there was no prospect of a British annexation or protectorate; and neither mission saw itself as in any way a precursor of more formal British control, the Baptists in particular being at some pains to demonstrate that they were not 'British agents'. By 1880 Leopold saw both missions as useful auxiliaries rather than as rivals; and he cultivated good relations with them not least in order to convince British opinion of his tolerant and enlightened religious policy, in pleasing contrast to that of Portugal.⁷¹

As early as 1878 the Baptists had advocated some form of international control as the most desirable political solution for the Congo basin; and they were quick to see in the *Association Internationale du Congo* an agency which might achieve this situation. They therefore kept the Foreign Office and the AIC informed of Brazza's proceedings; they cultivated close relations with Stanley and other AIC agents; and it was as conscious partisans of the AIC that towards the end of 1882 they responded enthusiastically to Hutton's invitation to support the public campaign against the Anglo-Portuguese negotiation. The Livingstone Mission, however, looked upon the AIC as a mere 'commercial organization', incapable of properly fulfilling the responsibilities of government; and they objected to the forcible methods of its agents. Failing British intervention, of which they had indeed no serious hope, the Livingstone Mission greatly preferred 'the government of France' to an AIC hegemony, which they equated with 'anarchy' and 'no government at all'. Although this mission was no less opposed than the Baptists to a Portuguese take-over, it was well aware of Hutton's real loyalties and therefore held aloof from his campaign of agitation.⁷²

Except perhaps in giving the Foreign Office early warning of Brazza's exploits, the missions had little influence on the course of events; but they did have a very shrewd appreciation of the realities of politics on the Congo. Both missions had already recognized, by 1882 at the latest, that some form of European control was inevitable. They evidently saw no future for the 'independent African chiefs', so beloved of the businessmen. Unlike many of the commercial opponents of the treaty—especially those Chambers of Commerce which seem to have parroted, quite uncritically and often verbatim, the views of Manchester⁷³—they understood from the outset the real motives of Hutton's agitation and they were able to shape their policies accordingly. The missions had of course good reason for their common hostility to Portugal. The Portuguese, apprehensive of the Vatican's reaction if they conceded to heretics rights and privileges which they in practice denied to non-Portuguese Catholics, resisted the British pressure for complete religious freedom no less tenaciously than the demand for completely free trade. Thanks to Anderson's persistence very comprehensive religious guarantees were ultimately obtained. But the missions lacked all confidence in Portuguese good faith in the observance of these; and they doubtless noticed that the

⁷¹ R. Slade, 'L'Attitude des missions protestantes vis-à-vis des puissances européennes au Congo avant 1885', in: *Bulletin de l'Institut Royal Colonial Belge*, 25 (1954), pp. 684-721. See Map 5.1, 'Missionary Activities in the Lower Congo before 1885', above.

⁷² Slade, 'Missions protestantes', p. 705, citing Mrs F. Guinness (LIM) to A. H. Baynes (Secretary BMS), 18 Nov. 1882. For Baptist agitation in Britain, cf. Anstey *Britain and the Congo*, pp. 123, 154-5.

⁷³ Cf. Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, pp. 116-20.

powers of the Anglo-Portuguese commission did not extend to the policing of the religious provisions of the treaty.⁷⁴

The Anglo-Portuguese Congo negotiation of 1882-4 was not part of any plan or programme for the 'quiet' extension of paramountcy. Such a plan had indeed been adopted by the Colonial Office in the mid-1870s. But by 1882 it had ceased to exist, strangled by the implacable opposition of Salisbury at the Foreign Office between 1878 and 1880; and given its *coup de grâce*—so belated as to be almost superfluous—in April 1881 by Granville's veto on further discussion of the Congo question with Lisbon. Moreover, with the revival of effective French competition in Africa, plans for the extension of paramountcy had become irrelevant; by November 1882 it was no longer a question of 'extension', but of defending existing spheres of informal empire against actual or potential French encroachment. In its attempts to devise an appropriate defensive strategy, the Colonial Office was severely inhibited both by established administrative policy and by recent political commitment; and its action was confused and ineffective. In this situation it was the Foreign Office, previously indifferent or hostile to the Congo negotiation, which took the initiative. Villiers Lister was deeply disturbed by the apparently systematic French offensive against informal empire both on the Niger and on the Congo: and frustrated by the adamant refusal of the Colonial Office to assert formal control even on the lower Niger. But Lister's revival in November 1882 of Morier's rejected Congo strategy was in no way a planned extension of paramountcy. It was a purely defensive expedient hastily improvised to meet an apparently serious emergency.

Lister's acute alarm is probably reflected in the over-hasty and ill-considered way in which the negotiation with Portugal appears to have been initiated: apparently without any serious analysis of its broader international implications and evidently without adequate consultation of the British interests locally involved. The client-state strategy, however attractive, was by late 1882 at best only very dubiously viable. Lister cannot easily escape the charge of having committed what Lord Salisbury once called 'the commonest error in politics . . . sticking to the carcasses of dead policies'.⁷⁵ By mid-1883 both Northbrook at the Admiralty and Kimberley (now at the India Office) were expressing strong misgivings about this strategy;⁷⁶ Granville nevertheless persisted in it. Moreover, the Foreign Office made all too many specific miscalculations. It assumed, on little or no evidence, that the French posed an immediate threat on the maritime Congo as well as on the upper Congo. It appears to have had no inkling of how widely its own perception of the Congo situation differed from those of the British groups with special interests there. Failing to learn from Morier's frustrations, it did not reckon with the tenacity of Portuguese resistance to the rigorous detailed conditions which were soon seen to be indispensable if the treaty was to have any chance of domestic acceptability and international recognition. Surprisingly, in view of its own frequent denigration of the Portuguese, it grossly underestimated the unpopularity of Portugal with the British public.

⁷⁴ Slade, 'Missions protestantes', especially pp. 709-15. Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, p. 144. Latour da Veiga Pinto, *Le Portugal et le Congo*, pp. 81-4. Anglo-Portuguese Treaty, Articles 4 and 7.

⁷⁵ Salisbury to Lytton, 25 May 1877: cited Cecil, *Life*

of Salisbury, vol. 2, p. 145.

⁷⁶ Northbrook to Granville, 2 May 1883; Kimberley to Granville, 12 June 1883: cited Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians*, p. 171.

Some of these errors certainly flowed from the absence of expert guidance on African affairs within the office. Between the retirement of W. H. Wylde and the virtual winding-up of the old Slave Trade Department in March 1880 and the appointment of Percy Anderson as head of the newly created Africa Department early in 1883, Villiers Lister had the general oversight of African affairs.⁷⁷ But Lister was not an African specialist; and when in November 1882 he revived Morier's Congo project, his grasp of the real state of affairs on the Congo was evidently shaky. Lister seems also to have been an impulsive man, prone to bouts of righteous indignation that affected his diplomatic judgment.⁷⁸ In his anger and alarm at French behaviour on the Congo, he failed to distinguish between imminent French moves and those that were merely potential or contingent; and he plunged into the negotiation apparently without considering the possibility that it might stimulate, rather than restrain, the ambitions of the French.

Even without the activities of Hutton, there would undoubtedly have been widespread and vigorous British opposition to the negotiation and treaty with Portugal. But without Hutton's skilful and energetic management and his extensive political and other 'connections', this opposition might not have succeeded in extorting from Gladstone the pledge to submit the treaty to parliament before its ratification. The consequent absolute necessity of securing, against tenacious Portuguese resistance, the most stringent possible safeguards, protracted the negotiation inordinately. Had the treaty, embodying an international and not an Anglo-Portuguese commission, been concluded fairly early in 1882, it might not have immediately encountered unmanageable opposition from other powers—although it is hard to believe that even in these circumstances it could have survived for very long. But at the end of February 1884 the treaty, with the less acceptable type of commission, was presented to a Jules Ferry now eager to annex the north bank of the maritime Congo and to a Bismarck about to lose patience with the dilatory shilly-shallying of London in the Angra Pequena affair. The timing of the treaty could hardly have been worse.

A stratagem devised to shore up the rickety edifice of British informal empire therefore succeeded only in facilitating a Franco-German alignment dedicated to the destruction of all British pretensions to unofficial preponderance. The Anglo-Portuguese Agreement was the trigger which activated political forces by now profoundly hostile to British informal empire. These forces soon demolished it almost without effort, not only on the maritime Congo but virtually throughout tropical Africa. Indeed, apart from one or two 'special cases',⁷⁹ no power could now rely on informal influence. Bismarck and King Leopold, as well as the British, found that formal possession was the only effective method of protecting their African interests.

⁷⁷ Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, p. 110. For the allocation of duties in the office, see the FO Lists, 1880-4.

⁷⁸ Lister was so incensed by Leopold's 'shabby and mischievous trick' in granting the *droit de préférence* to France that in Nov. 1884 he persistently opposed British recognition of the Congo State, in spite of Bismarck's clear warning that a refusal would lead to 'a generally unfriendly attitude of Germany' not only on the Niger, but on the Nile. Cf. J. Stengers, 'King Leopold and Anglo-French Rivalry'; W. R. Louis, 'The Berlin Congo

Conference': both in Gifford and Louis, *France and Britain*, pp. 121-66: 162 and 167-220: 200-3. And cf. Lister's very intemperate and 'undiplomatic' language on the alleged shortcomings of the Portuguese and the French.

⁷⁹ For instance: Britain in Egypt; Britain in South Africa after Bismarck's renunciation in May 1885 of Germany's existing and potential claims in Zululand; Germany at Vitu and on the Benadir coast.

Imperial competition in Africa, previously the almost exclusive concern of Britain and France, was suddenly transformed into a multi-power scramble. At the Berlin Conference Bismarck attempted to limit and control this scramble by setting up, on the ruins of British informal empire, a system of international co-operation—a kind of ‘collective imperialism’⁸⁰—over a very large area of tropical Africa. This attempt was a failure, tacitly acknowledged by Bismarck himself when on the day following the signature of the Berlin Act he began to acquire for Germany extensive territories in the East African sector of the ‘Congo Free Trade Zone’; and thereby extended the scramble from West Africa to the east African mainland.⁸¹

⁸⁰ I owe this phrase and concept to Dr Gervase Clarence-Smith.

⁸¹ Cf. Meritt, ‘Bismarck’.

The Portuguese and Spanish Roles in the Scramble for Africa: An Economic Interpretation

GERVASE CLARENCE-SMITH

The part played by Portugal and Spain in the partition of Africa has been generally misunderstood, when it has not been simply ignored altogether. It was the Portuguese who initially proposed that there should be an international conference to resolve the objections to the Anglo-Portuguese treaty of 1884, which ceded the mouth of the Congo to Portugal. And yet, Portugal's reasons for staking out a claim to the vast empire in Africa have constantly been reduced to the simplistic and misleading interpretation of national pride. Richard Hammond summarizes this position as follows: 'Portugal, at the time of the nineteenth century scramble for Africa, held title to a few bits of African seaboard and little besides: no overseas fortunes, no capitalists seeking overseas investments, no large military forces seeking overseas employment.'¹ Every single phrase in this statement is wrong, and yet it is only recently that it has begun to be challenged, most notably by Valentim Alexandre, Angela Guimarães, and Greg Pirio.² In my own recent book, I have tried to demonstrate in detail the falsity of Hammond's approach, and the interested reader is referred to it for periods other than that of the actual partition of Africa.³

If Portugal's role in the scramble for Africa has been misunderstood, that of Spain has been almost totally ignored. Moreover, the few who have bothered with the phenomenon have by and large given the same misleading interpretations as for the Portuguese case.⁴ The fact that Spain ended up with small, scattered, and apparently worthless possessions in Africa, in sharp contrast to her American empire of earlier centuries, has given the impression that Spain had no more than a negligible interest in the partition of Africa. And yet, Spain was swept by a wave of enthusiasm for African colonies in the early 1880s, an enthusiasm which cannot simply be ascribed to national pride.

The distorted portrayal of the Portuguese and Spanish participation in the scramble for Africa has its roots in another myth, that of the economic stagnation of the Iberian peninsula in the nineteenth century. The two countries are often portrayed as

¹ R. Hammond, 'Some Economic Aspects of Portuguese Africa in the 19th and 20th Centuries', in L. Gann and P. Duignan (eds.), *Colonialism in Africa, 1870-1960*, 5 vols., Cambridge 1969-75, vol. 4; *The Economics of Colonialism*, Cambridge 1975, pp. 256-83, p. 256.

² V. Alexandre, *Origens do colonialismo português moderno, 1822-1891*, Lisbon 1979; A. Guimarães, *Uma corrente do colonialismo português: A Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa, 1875-1895*, Lisbon 1984; G. Pirio, 'Commerce, Industry and Empire: The Making of Modern Portuguese Colonialism in Angola and Mozambique, 1890-1914', Ph.D.

thesis, University of California at Los Angeles, 1982.

³ G. Clarence-Smith, *The Third Portuguese Empire, 1825-1975: A Study in Economic Imperialism*, Manchester 1985.

⁴ M. C. Lécuyer and C. Serrano, *La Guerre d'Afrique et ses répercussions en Espagne, 1859-1904*, Paris 1976; R. Bogard, 'Africanismo and Morocco, 1830-1912', Ph.D. thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1975; B. J. Hahs jun., 'Spain and the Scramble for Africa: The Africanistas and the Gulf of Guinea', Ph.D. thesis, University of New Mexico, 1980.

'underdeveloped', especially by historians of Africa, but also by many historians of the peninsula. The Iberians are said to have been seized by a kind of fit of collective nostalgia, contemplating the glorious sixteenth century and mindless of the present. Hence, it is argued, came their obsession with the appearance of still being great imperial powers. This picture is almost entirely false. Both Iberian nations underwent traumatic and prolonged revolutions in the early years of the nineteenth century, which swept away the absolutist past and secured the political hegemony of the bourgeoisie. To be sure, neither country was able to 'catch up' with the accelerating industrial revolution of North Western Europe, even though industry grew rapidly from the middle of the century. However, both nations were profoundly reorganized in terms of the nature of economic production and of political power. The fact that titled men dominated the political process until late in the century has led some superficial analysts to the ludicrous conclusion that the aristocracy retained its power. An analysis of biographies quickly reveals that the ruling class in the nineteenth century was in fact a titled bourgeoisie. The key point about Portugal and Spain at this period was that they were capitalist countries, but backward capitalist countries. It is only in the light of these two characteristics that one can understand their role in the partition of Africa.⁵

As late industrializing countries, Portugal and Spain were extremely vulnerable to the 'Great Depression', which affected the capitalist world from the early 1870s to the mid-1890s. In the Mediterranean, the crisis was much more severe than in Northern Europe, because of a greater dependence on agriculture. An avalanche of cheap foodstuffs from the Americas, the Antipodes, and Russia completely overturned the boom in agricultural exports from the Mediterranean which had developed earlier in the century. Not only were external markets lost, but cheap grain also invaded the home market. Rural incomes declined, constraining the internal market for the struggling new industrial sector. Industry's problems were compounded by the dumping practiced by more advanced countries struggling with an overproduction crisis.

Protectionism was the obvious, though not necessarily the best political response to the disaster. Iberian governments were to some extent constrained by the commercial treaties passed in earlier euphoric decades of high agricultural prices. Moreover, exporters of certain products were fearful of retaliatory measures by other countries. The immensely powerful wine producers of both countries, with a strongly capitalist and export-orientated structure of production, were in the forefront of this lobby. Moreover, free trade ideology had made serious inroads during the prosperous decades of the middle of the century, and was able to influence some members of the bourgeoisie in contradiction to their narrow and immediate economic interests. But, for all this, the pressure for protection became ever stronger as the crisis deepened. Not only growing numbers of the bourgeoisie, but also the industrial workers and sectors of the struggling petty bourgeoisie called for protection. The early 1880s were the turning point, when the first serious protectionist measures were adopted. Throughout the decade, and culminating in the early 1890s, tariff barriers grew steadily higher in both countries.⁶

⁵ M. Villaverde Cabral, *O desenvolvimento do capitalismo em Portugal no século XIX*, Lisbon 1977, 2nd ed.; R. J. Harrison, *An Economic History of Modern Spain*, Manchester 1978.

⁶ M. Halpern Pereira, *Livre-câmbio e desenvolvimento económico: Portugal na segunda metade do século XIX*, Lisbon 1971; Harrison, *Economic History*.

The interest in colonial affairs, which galvanized political life in Portugal and Spain from the mid-1870s, can only be understood in the context of extending protectionism from the small home market to a wider imperial one. This was an ancient and time-honoured tradition in the peninsula, which had been used most successfully during the Pombaline and Bourbon reforms of the latter part of the eighteenth century. Indeed, colonial protection was sometimes a way of resolving conflicting interests in the peninsula. Thus, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Catalan cotton textile industry gained secure colonial protection in Cuba, in return for accepting somewhat less stringent protection at home.⁷

An often forgotten economic actor in the whole story was the colonial or 'creole' bourgeoisie. They were deeply implanted in Portuguese Africa, whereas the rise of a similar Spanish group during the Cuban slave trade had scarcely survived the demise of the trade. Essentially a trading élite, they were opposed to a rigid colonial pact which would tie them to metropolitan suppliers, but were nevertheless worried at the erosion of their commercial position. The illegal slave trade of the nineteenth century had been a golden opportunity to benefit at the expense of their European rivals, but those days were over. The trade slump of the early 1870s led to cut-throat rivalry on the coasts of Africa, a point which has often been noted when opposing European and African traders at the time of the scramble, but which was also vital in creating rivalries between creoles and Europeans. The creoles of Portuguese Africa had diversified into slave-based plantations of sugar-cane, coffee, cocoa, cotton, and other products, but this activity was also threatened by the growing might of colonial powers totally opposed to slave labour. Represented in the Portuguese Parliament since 1820, powerfully connected through family and godfathers, the creoles were active in both the overt and covert politics of Portugal.⁸

Economic motives were not alone in furthering an interest in colonial expansion, but political and ideological motives cannot be divorced from the general context of economic crisis. The recession broke the fragile social and political peace which had been established in the prosperous years of the middle of the century, after decades of revolution and civil war. For the peasant masses ruined by the agricultural depression, emigration to Brazil and other parts of the Americas acted as a safety-valve. In any case, illiterate and largely self-sufficient, they had rarely taken an active political role. In contrast, the petty bourgeoisie and the workers of the towns were less prone to emigrate, more educated, and increasingly affected by the spread of republican, socialist, and anarchist ideas. Whether consciously or unconsciously, and most often probably a mixture of the two, nationalist ideas were employed as the most effective counter-ideology against urban radicalism. All the weight of the previous four centuries of Iberian history ensured that nationalist ideologies usually, though not always, had a major imperialist dimension to them. At the same time, some of the radical currents, notably parts of the republican movement, themselves began to appropriate imperialist discourse and to argue that the monarchists could not be trusted with the imperial burden. What is certain is that in the difficult economic circumstances of the early 1880s, nationalist sentiment over colonial issues could easily be whipped into a frenzy. This kind of reaction was as short-lived as it was strong, and

⁷ E. Escarra, *Le Développement industriel de la Catalogne*, Paris 1908.

⁸ Clarence-Smith, *The Third Portuguese Empire*, chs. 2 and 3.

must be distinguished from the cooler and more long-term calculations of those groups with a major economic interest in colonial expansion.⁹

The cotton textile industry was the most influential lobby in Portugal in favour of colonial expansion. As in so many countries, cotton textiles played a predominant role in the early phases of the Portuguese industrial revolution. Although mainly turned towards import substitution, the industry had a long history of exploiting protected markets in the colonies, and by the 1870s Angola and the smaller West African territories of Portugal were the industry's only significant external market. Moreover, cotton textiles were by far and away Africa's largest import from the West, and the possibilities for long-term growth in sales were much greater in Africa than on the limited Portuguese home market. However, the cotton textile industry entered a deep crisis in the late 1870s, as the effects of the world recession and attendant competition made themselves felt, both at home and in Africa. By the early 1880s, there were large stocks of unsaleable goods, plant was lying idle, dividends were no longer paid, many workers were laid off or on short time, and exports had dwindled to about a tenth of the levels achieved a decade earlier.

The cotton textile industrialists reached to the crisis by clamouring for protectionist measures at home and colonial expansion abroad. Mainly situated in the north, especially the spinning and weaving interests most directly affected by the slump, they supported the Lisbon Geographical Society, founded in 1875 with a strong pro-colonial orientation, and founded their own pressure group in Oporto. The Society for Commercial Geography of Oporto functioned regularly from 1880 to 1888, and some of the greatest industrialists of the north were members. One of the constant preoccupations of the society was the African market for northern industry, and in this they were supported by many of the northern newspapers and by the Commercial Association of Oporto. The constant barrage of protectionist and pro-colonial propaganda was one of the factors which helped to swing public opinion away from free trade ideology in the crucial early years of the 1880s. In practical terms, these various pressure groups were solidly behind the renewed spurt of Portuguese exploration in Central Africa from the late 1870s. Contributing financially to the costs of the expeditions of Serpa Pinto, Silva Porto, Dias de Carvalho, Hermenegildo Capello, and Roberto Ivens, they also made sure that the explorers gave detailed accounts of the potential markets in Central Africa, and provided them with specimens of cotton cloth and other Portuguese manufacturers which might be sold in the Dark Continent. José Capela comments drily that one of Carvalho's circulars to the manufacturers of Lisbon and Oporto was more like a letter from a commercial traveller than from an explorer.¹⁰ It is all the more puzzling that Richard Hammond, and others of his ilk, should have pointed to these expeditions as examples of uneconomic imperialism.¹¹

The most powerful lobby ranged against the cotton textile industry was the wine producers, in spite of the fact that wine was the second most valuable export to the empire after textiles. This apparent paradox is explained by the structure of the wine

⁹ A. H. de Oliveira Marques, *História de Portugal*, Lisbon 1978, 5th ed., R. Carr, *Spain, 1808-1975*, Oxford 1982. For a stimulating theoretical view of nationalism, B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, London 1983.

¹⁰ J. Capela, *A burguesia mercantil do Porto e as colónias, 1834-1900*, Oporto 1975, p. 146, and more generally

chs. 6 and 7; Clarence-Smith, *The Third Portuguese Empire*, pp. 67-8 and p. 90.

¹¹ R. Hammond, *Portugal and Africa, 1815-1910: A Study in Uneconomic Imperialism*, Stanford 1966, pp. 101-2, for one example.

industry. High quality wines, especially Port and Madeira, were sold to England and other economically advanced countries. The chances of increasing sales of quality wines in Africa was negligible. Moreover, a hugely lucrative market for ordinary wines opened up in France in the years when phylloxera had ravaged the French vineyards, but not yet reached Portugal. Clearly the wine producers were not opposed to selling more ordinary wine and cheap brandies in Africa, but they were much more concerned with preserving Western markets and they feared retaliatory measures by Britain and France. It was only later, when sales of quality wines slumped, the French market was closed, and competition hotted up on the Brazilian market, that the Portuguese wine industry became a vociferous supporter of colonial protection.¹²

Shipping entrepreneurs, in contrast, were even more resolutely colonialist than the cotton textile industrialists, although less influential in economic and political terms. Shipping was entering an exceptionally severe crisis by the end of the 1870s. It is no exaggeration to claim that colonial protection saved the Portuguese merchant navy from disappearing from the high seas altogether, which would have been a sad fate for the country of Vasco da Gama. The transition from sail to steam was particularly difficult for Portugal. The country lacked a heavy industrial base and could not produce its own steamers or coal. Even Scottish engineers had to be imported at great cost to run the steamers. Sailing ships continued to service the coastal trade, but could no longer compete with the freight rates of steamers on the high seas.

Colonial monopoly was the answer. The *Empresa Nacional de Navegação* was set up in 1880 and in the following year obtained a government contract to serve the colonial ports of Western Africa. Foreign shipping was kept out of the traffic between Portugal and these ports, in spite of commercial treaties, by the legal artifice of declaring the traffic 'great coastal trade'. Behind this lucrative company were two powerful families. The Bensaúdes were Moroccan Jews, who had settled in the Azores early in the nineteenth century as humble peddlers and who had gradually built up an impressive economic position in the archipelago and in Lisbon, with a monopoly on steamer navigation between the Atlantic islands and Angola, including one for gold mines, and built up a large commercial business with that colony. The other family were the Lima Mayers, the dominant force in the *Banco Lisboa e Açores*, one of the foremost Portuguese banks of this epoch, with wide interests in manufacturing and commerce. The historians of these two powerful clans show how wide were the ties of family, friendship, and influence which they enjoyed in the Portuguese ruling class.¹³

The overseas bank, the *Banco Nacional Ultramarino*, was another powerful economic group, with widely ramified interests and a considerable stake in painting the map of Africa with as much Portuguese pink as possible. Founded in 1864, with a monopoly over banking and note-issuing in the colonies, the bank also played a major role in the development of the slave-based plantation sector in Angola, São Tomé and the Cape Verde islands. The bank provided credit and acted as a commodity broker, especially for sales of coffee in Lisbon. Because of its monopoly of credit, the bank also had a finger in every other economic activity in the colonies, the most significant of which was probably speculation in real estate. Rather unusually for Portugal at this period,

¹² J. Capela, *O vinho para o preto*, Oporto 1973; Clarence-Smith, *The Third Portuguese Empire*, pp. 92-4.

¹³ A. Bensaúde, *Vida de José Bensaúde*, Oporto 1936; F. de Lima Mayer, *Livro de Família*, Lisbon 1969. For a general overview of shipping, Clarence-Smith, *The Third Portuguese Empire*, pp. 94-7.

the bank was a joint stock company, in which no individual or family had a dominant stake. The share registers thus read like a roll call of the Portuguese and creole bourgeoisie. However, a particularly large stake in the bank by the early 1880s had fallen into the hands of Henrique Burnay, without question the foremost banker and financier of his day in Portugal.¹⁴

Mention should also be made of a group of Oporto businessmen with an eye on railway development in Central Africa. The concession for the grandly named Royal Transafrican Railway Company, to start in Luanda, was only granted in 1885, but plans for such a railway were being hatched earlier. The men involved were already involved in railway construction in Portugal and Spain in the early 1880s, notably the line along the Douro river in Northern Portugal. The success of such a scheme was seen as crucially dependent on Portuguese government support and on a favourable settlement of Portuguese territorial claims in Central Africa.¹⁵

In addition to these clearly recognizable single interests, there was a more nebulous but powerful interest group, the traders of Lisbon, represented by the Lisbon Commercial Association. The essential thing for them was that the Portuguese state should guarantee Lisbon's position as an *entrepôt* in colonial trade, a venerable tradition going back to the fifteenth century. As a result, they were rather hostile to a form of colonial protectionism which obliged them to sell Portuguese cottons and other goods in Africa, rather than superior and cheaper English goods. Thus, they preferred a system of tariffs which made it prohibitively expensive for British merchants to sell cottons and buy palm oil directly in the Congo-Angola area, and forced them to trade through Lisbon. The Angola tariffs of 1880-1 were very much geared to the desires of Lisbon traders, and the British consul in Luanda fulminated about the new tariffs 'favourable only to the monopolizing interests of Lisbon merchants'. In this context, British traders' fears about what the Portuguese might do in the Congo are readily understandable, and the 1880-1 tariffs were not conducive to the international acceptance of Portuguese territorial claims. However, it is important not to accept the British ideological presentation of the Lisbon merchants as backward and incapable. In reality, the British feared the sharp commercial acumen of a group of traders whom they knew only too well.¹⁶

British traders were not the only ones to react with fury to the 1880-1 tariffs, for they were joined in their protests by the Angolan traders, represented by the Luanda Commercial Association. However, although both groups of merchants could unite against their Lisbon rivals, they also had divergent interests. The creole commercial community backed Portuguese claims to the Congo estuary to the hilt, with the intention of using Portuguese sovereignty to establish themselves as the privileged or unique commercial intermediaries in the booming trade. However, they did not wish to be obliged to trade through Lisbon, and preferred to deal directly with foreign clients. The creole trading position along the disputed coast must not be underestimated. In Duparquet's detailed survey of trading houses between Sette Cama and Ambriz in 1874, only the Dutch factories outnumbered the Portuguese, by 41 to 37. The British

¹⁴ Banco Nacional Ultramarino, *Relatórios*; Arquivo do Banco Nacional Ultramarino, Lisbon, share registers.

¹⁵ Guimarães, *Uma corrente*, pp. 59 and p. 71; Clarence-Smith, *The Third Portuguese Empire*, pp. 98-9.

¹⁶ *British Parliamentary Papers*, 1882, C.3968, Report of Luanda consul; Associação Comercial de Lisboa, *Relatórios*.

had 29 factories, and the French, Spaniards, and Americans trailed behind with 13, 5, and 2 respectively. In other words, nearly a third of the factories were Portuguese. Most of these appear to have been locally owned rather than Lisbon based, although more research is needed on this point.¹⁷

Apart from the bourgeoisie, there were other groups in Portuguese and creole society with a vested interest in colonial expansion. For the employee group in the petty bourgeoisie, a secure job and steady promotion in the state apparatus were the great goals in life. The size and promotion prospects of the navy were those most directly related to colonial expansion, both in the merchant and the royal navy. The governors and high officials of the colonies in the early 1880s were usually naval officers, and they were some of the most ardent proponents of territorial expansion. The army also had few prospects for expansion and promotion outside the colonial sphere, although their colonial glory was mainly a later affair, linked to the 'pacification' campaigns of the 1890s. And the colonies provided a multiplicity of jobs and hopes for more rapid upward mobility for a host of other civilian officials. In this context, it is important to remember that Portugal possessed fully constituted colonies and major towns prior to the scramble, and that colonial careers had been a time-honoured outlet for ambitious young men since the fifteenth century. Moreover, government service was of crucial importance to the creole population, who had always combined trade and public office. It was often creole officers and bureaucrats who were the most effective publicists for Portuguese colonial expansion.¹⁸

For the Church, expanding employment opportunities were complemented by an amelioration of relations with the state. Since the anticlerical measures taken by the Portuguese liberal revolutionaries in the 1830s, religious congregations had been banned in Portugal and the Church had lost its property. One of the unintended side-effects had been a considerable weakening of Portugal's position in many parts of the empire, where the congregations had been a pillar of the colonial regime. In a climate of growing rivalry over Africa, and with the arrival of British and American Protestant missionaries in Angola in the 1870s, the Church was able to wrest a series of concessions from the state, in order to allow religious congregations to operate once more. The services rendered by Father Barroso to Portuguese territorial claims, in his position as missionary in the Congo kingdom from 1881, made him a national hero and greatly improved the standing of the Church of Portugal. It is also a good example of the way in which the Portuguese used their ancient skills and connections in order to play African politics in their favour in the diplomatic disputes over the Congo region.¹⁹

Even at the most humble levels of Portuguese society, it is possible to discern real economic interests in colonial expansion, although a great deal more research is required into this question. For the cotton textile labourers and for the dockers and sailors of Lisbon, employment was closely related to colonial affairs. The socialist and anarchist movements were generally hostile to colonialism on principle, but there was

¹⁷ *British Parliamentary Papers*, 1882, C.3968, Report of Luanda consul; M. A. Fernandes de Oliveira, *Angolana, documentação sobre Angola*, 2 vols., Luanda 1968 and 1971, *passim*, e.g. vol. 2, pp. 33-40; F. Bontinck, 'État commercial du littoral entre Sette et Ambriz en 1874: Document inédit', in *Likundoli*, series B, vol. 5, no. 2 (1977), pp. 165-83 (the original manuscript by Duparquet is in the archives of the Holy Ghost Fathers in Paris).

¹⁸ Clarence-Smith, *The Third Portuguese Empire*, p. 111; R. Pélissier, *Les Guerres grises: Résistance et révoltes en Angola, 1845-1941*, Orgeval 1977.

¹⁹ A. Brásio, *Angola*, 3 vols., Pittsburgh and Louvain 1966-1971, vols. 2 and 3 for the documents. For Barroso, see also F. Bontinck, 'Pedro V, roi de Kongo, face au partage colonial', in *Africa* (Rome), 37 (1982), pp. 1-53.

considerable ambiguity on the question in parts of the working class organizations.²⁰ For the peasantry, the colonies were traditionally an outlet for emigration. It is true that the reputation for unhealthiness of the African colonies repelled prospective migrants, who preferred to go to Brazil, but Portuguese hopes for the annexation of the healthy and mineral rich highlands of Central Africa opened up new horizons and hopes of a 'new Brazil'.²¹

In addition to the interests of particular social groups, there were general economic interests in colonial expansion, which were expressed directly by the state bureaucracy. Foremost among these was the pressing necessity to find a solution to the balance of payments problem, or the gold question as it was put in those days. As a result of the collapse in the prices of Mediterranean exports, Portugal's balance of trade went ever further into the red. The growing deficit was covered partly by emigrants' remittances from Brazil, but also by borrowing abroad, and the debt burden was rapidly becoming a threat to the stability of Portugal's economy, and indeed to its political independence. Colonial enthusiasts had long argued that one way of saving gold was to import more from the colonies for consumption in Portugal. However most colonial products competed directly with those of Brazil, where the Portuguese mercantile community was still extremely well entrenched. Moreover, and of more immediate importance, the treasury depended heavily on import duties for its revenue, and constantly opposed fiscal concessions aimed at increasing imports for consumption for the colonies.²²

The treasury was far more interested in earning gold through the re-exporting of colonial produce via Lisbon, suitably encouraged by discriminatory tariffs. This had the advantage of increasing foreign exchange earning, while simultaneously bringing in revenue through re-export duties, port dues, and other miscellaneous taxes. It was a system of venerable antiquity, going back to the fifteenth century, and one which had developed in a satisfactory manner for African products since the 1840s. In an era when exchange controls were unknown, it was the only way for Portugal to benefit from the foreign exchange earnings of the colonies. Moreover, it had the advantage of meshing perfectly with the private interests of the Lisbon merchants and the steamer company. Angola was at the heart of this re-export trade, with its ivory, wax, orchilia, and, increasingly, coffee and wild rubber. However, Britain's persistent refusal to allow Portugal to integrate the Congo trade into the protectionist network was a major drawback. Not only was the booming Congo trade lost, but much of the trade of Angola proper was diverted north to Congo ports.²³ This probably explains why Portugal was ready to accept the terms of the Anglo-Portuguese treaty of 1884. Even if protectionism could not be imposed on the Congo trade itself, at least a Portuguese administration could stem the flow of commodities north from Angola.

The key question of foreign exchange has been obscured by the debate over colonial fiscal deficits, which is really a red herring. Hammond has tried to demonstrate that the Portuguese state continuously lost money in the empire, and that this proves that it

²⁰ S. Sideri, *Trade and Power: Informal Colonialism in Anglo-Portuguese Relations*, Rotterdam 1970, p. 194, for an over-ideological view; P. Ramos de Almeida, *História do colonialismo português em África*, 2 vols., Lisbon 1978-9, vol. 2, p. 233.

²¹ M. Halpern Pereira, *A política portuguesa de emigração*,

1850-1930, Lisbon 1981, esp. p. 50.

²² Clarence-Smith, *The Third Portuguese Empire*, pp. 86-8; Pereira, *Livre-câmbio*, pp. 282-3.

²³ Clarence-Smith, *The Third Portuguese Empire*, pp. 65-6 and p. 87; *British Parliamentary Papers*, 1882, C.3968, Luanda consular report.

was an 'uneconomic imperialism'.²⁴ There can be no doubt that official figures show deficits averaging at around £400,000 sterling per year in the 1880s, including both budgetary deficits in the colonies, and expenditure in the latter account came from railway building, either directly by the state or in the form of guarantees to private companies. Arguably, this could be considered a form of public investment rather than a straight deficit on current expenditure, and the Lourenço Marques and Goa railways were to become very profitable investments for the Portuguese government in later years. Moreover, this system of accounting leaves out all forms of revenue collected in Portugal but originating in the colonies. Import duties, transit duties, port dues, and a whole variety of taxes on fortunes made by private individuals in the empire are not included. It is thus not at all clear that the Portuguese state did run a colonial fiscal deficit. But even if it did, it was a relatively small one, and it was more than offset by all the advantages noted above.²⁵ It is in any case wrong to give such weight to this one variable, when it is a truism that public deficits and private fortunes go hand in hand. And anybody contemplating the astonishing luxury of an edifice such as the palace of the Marquises of Valflor in Lisbon can scarcely doubt the scale of the private fortunes amassed in the Portuguese colonies in the late nineteenth century.

In the light of all these factors, it is important to refute the widely publicised view that Portugal lost nothing in the scramble, rather gaining huge areas to which she had only paper claims. It is certain that Portugal gained areas over which she exercised no administrative control. What Portugal lost was a trading zone which stretched from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean, including the southern part of the Congo basin and the Congo estuary. By the 1840s already, ivory traders from Angola and Mozambique had met on the Upper Zambezi, and they more than held their own against the Cape traders penetrating from the south. In the Congo estuary, the focus of the rivalries which led to the Berlin Conference—the Portuguese and creole commercial community—was solidly entrenched and keenly competitive. Indeed, it is one of the ironies of the situation that the Portuguese traders survived the partition and came to dominate retail trading and a large part of wholesale trading in all the western half of the Belgian Congo and in the French Congo. But this commercial position only benefited Portugal to the extent that profits were remitted to the metropolis. The ultra-protectionist network imposed on the parts of Angola outside the Congo Free Zone could not be extended further north.²⁶

In view of the fundamental interests involved, it is scarcely surprising that the Portuguese bourgeoisie organized itself from the latter part of the 1870s to fight for its share of the spoils. The foremost pressure groups was the Lisbon Geographic Society, founded in 1875, which has been studied by Angela Guimarães. Although the exact nature of the funding of the society remains unclear, the overseas bank, the national shipping company, and the Bank of Portugal all contributed. Amongst its members were some of the most illustrious representatives of the economic élite and many of the

²⁴ R. Hammond, 'Economic Imperialism: Sidelights on a Stereotype', in *Journal of Economic History*, 21 (1961), pp. 582–98.

²⁵ Clarence-Smith, *The Third Portuguese Empire*, p. 86. Figures come from the published reports of overseas ministers for 1898, 1899, 1902, and 1905.

²⁶ For Central Africa, see the various publications of David Livingstone and Silva Porto; for the Congo estuary, Oliveira, *Angolana*; for later Portuguese commercial predominance, I am indebted to information from Jean-Luc Vellut.

politicians in various Portuguese governments. By the early 1880s, the society already had a clearly worked out plan for colonial expansion, based on a detailed appreciation of the Portuguese economy in all its sectors and with well thought out economic recommendations. Although expressed in the fashionable international jargon of 'civilizing stations', this was really a plan for a technocratic and only moderately protectionist form of imperial rule in the whole of Central Africa.²⁷ Across the road from the Geographic Society's headquarters, one finds another venerable institution and powerful colonial pressure group, the Lisbon Commercial Association. Through its spokesperson António José de Seixas, an old hand in the Angola trade, through its reports, and above all through the advice which successive governments sought from it, the association exercised considerable influence over colonial policy. Like the Geographic Society, the association included prominent creole businessmen among its members. Like its sister organization in Oporto, already referred to earlier, the association was rather misnamed, in that it included industrial as well as commercial members.²⁸

In this context, it seems that the run-up to the Berlin Conference has to be assessed somewhat differently from the usual picture given. In addition to King Leopold's and Brazza's activities, one must include aggressive Portuguese expansionism. Far from simply peddling dusty historical documents round the chanceries of Europe, the Portuguese and the creoles were spreading their commercial influence, sending out numerous explorers, missionaries, and military expeditions, reorganizing their colonial administration, spending on basic public works such as ports and railways, planning white settlement on a large scale, and generally threatening to create an effective Central African empire. In the Congo region in particular, the Portuguese made greater use of gunboats to protect their traders against real or imagined vexations on the part of Africans, subsidized the Congo and Cabinda Catholic missions, and did their best to win over African chiefs. Behind this sudden burst of activity was not wounded national pride, but a shrewd appreciation of the value of colonies in overcoming times of economic slump.²⁹

Spain was a minor actor at the Berlin Conference, but unlike some of the other countries not in the limelight, Spain had real interests in Africa, and more particularly in the Congo and Niger basins. The Spaniards had not been active in the Africa trade before 1800, but when the slave trade was banned by Britain, there was a new spurt of Spanish activity in order to supply Cuba and Puerto Rico with slaves. When slave imports into the Spanish Antilles were finally stopped in the latter 1860s, the numbers of Spanish ships in African coastal waters dropped off sharply. Nevertheless, some Spanish commercial firms, Catalan in the great majority of cases, did make the transition to legitimate commerce, especially in the Congo palm oil trade.³⁰ Moreover, unlike Holland and the United States, Spain had territorial claims in the region. In the late eighteenth century, Portugal ceded the islands of Fernando Po and Annobón to

²⁷ Guimarães, *Uma corrente*, ch. 2.

²⁸ Associação Commercial de Lisboa, *Relatórios*; J. Roque da Fonseca, *Cem anos em defesa da economia nacional, 1834-1934: Historia da Associação Comercial de Lisboa*, Lisbon 1934.

²⁹ Guimarães, *Uma corrente*, ch. 2; for details, Oliveira, *Angolana*.

³⁰ D. Eltis, 'The Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1821-1843', Ph.D. thesis, University of Rochester (NY), 1978. For Spanish legitimate trade, Lécuyer and Serrano, *La Guerre d'Afrique*, p. 248; Bontinck, 'État commercial'; Oliveira, *Angolana*, vol. 1, pp. 478 and 738, and vol. 2, pp. 33-40.

Spain, together with trading rights in the whole Gulf of Guinea, in exchange for territorial adjustments in South America. Although Spanish occupation of the coast was limited to a very small area round the Rio Muni north of Gabon, the Spaniards had ambitions for extending their possessions far into the interior, including part of what became the Congo Free Trade Zone. In this they came up against the persistent opposition of France.³¹

However, Central Africa was amongst the lowest priorities of the Spanish colonial lobby. The defence of Spanish interests in Cuba and Puerto Rico against American designs was by far and away the most important task. In South East Asia, the Spaniards faced a determined challenge for Germany over the possession of the Micronesian archipelagoes of the Pacific, and from Britain over the control of North East Borneo. And in Africa itself, the overriding obsession was with Morocco and the Sahara. Nevertheless, Spain protested against the abortive 1884 Anglo-Portuguese Treaty concerning the Congo estuary. Later in the year, the explorer Iradier was sent to Rio Muni with grandiose instructions to make treaties from the Niger delta to the Rio Campo and establish Spanish bases. Iradier arrived very late, to find that the British already had the Niger delta and that the Germans had declared their protectorate over the Cameroons. In the Rio Muni area itself, the French were busily expanding from Gabon and threatening to confine the Spaniards to a few islets off the coast. The expedition countered by making its own treaties and claiming for Spain an area nearly three times the size of the present enclave. The French refused to consider the Spanish claims at the Berlin Conference, but late in 1885 agreed to negotiate. However, it was not till 1900 that an agreement was finally reached.³²

The dispute with France, which also concerned the frontiers of the recently declared Spanish protectorate in the Sahara, occurred in an atmosphere of emotional nationalism. The Africanista movement reached its greatest audience in 1884, after years of meeting very little echo in Spanish public opinion. In a classic process, the Africanista movement had begun in 1876 by setting up the Madrid Geographic Society, which had then spawned a number of more political organizations. In 1877, the Spanish section of King Leopold's International African Association began to function, and like other national sections rapidly came to pursue narrowly national ambitions. As in Portugal, these interlinked organizations had a membership in which the economic and financial élite of the country was well represented. Although Morocco took up the bulk of the time and funds of the Africanista movement, explorers were also sent to East Africa, where Spain hoped to obtain a coaling station on the new Suez Canal route to the Philippines. But it was only as the European scramble for Africa began to gain momentum that the Africanistas were able to gain a truly national audience.³³

While there can be no doubt that Spain participated in the scramble as a fully colonialist power, the motivations for participation have been misinterpreted in much the same way as for Portugal. Far from being a nostalgic throwback to the days of Spanish imperial greatness, colonial expansion reflected the economic crisis in Spain.

³¹ J. A. Moreno Moreno, *Reseña histórica de la presencia de España en el Golfo de Guinea*, Madrid 1952; maps in A. de Unzueta y Yuste, *Guinea continental española*, Madrid 1944.

³² Hahs, 'Spain and the Scramble'.

³³ Bogard, 'Africanismo'; Lécuyer and Serrano, *La Guerre d'Afrique*, part 3.

The protectionist grip on Cuba and Puerto Rico was intensified from 1882, while the Philippines were for the first time drawn firmly within the Spanish system, and efforts were made to extend Spain's commercial position in North Africa. The main beneficiaries of all this were the wheat producers of Castile, the cotton textile industrialists of Catalonia, and the ship-owners of the northern ports. Wheat producers had no interest in sub-Saharan Africa, but the same cannot be said of the cotton textile and shipping industries. As in Portugal, these were the two most powerful economic lobbies for expansion into the Dark Continent.³⁴

One firm in particular played a major role in Spanish expansion into Africa, the *Compañía Transatlántica*. It was founded in the 1850s to exploit steamer navigation to the Spanish Antilles by a Cuban slave trader of Santander origins, Antonio López y López, later Marquis of Comillas. From the mid-1870s, López began to widen his horizons to other colonies, creating the *Banco Hispano-Colonial* in 1876, and obtaining a *de facto* monopoly of Filipino tobacco production in 1881. Two years later, he was succeeded by his son, who added African ambitions to the firm, with shipping, railway, mining, and fishing interests in Morocco and the Sahara, and commercial and shipping operations in Equatorial Guinea. It is true that these African activities were not undertaken until 1887, but it was surely not by chance that the Marquis of Comillas was one of the main financial backers of the Africanista movement at the time of the Berlin Conference.³⁵

Lécuyer and Serrano attempt to refute any economic motivations for the Africanista movement, on the grounds that it was essentially free trading in its rhetoric. However, they show themselves that the Africanistas were by no means always free traders. In fact, the contradiction between protectionism and free trade would seem to spring from the complexities and weaknesses of Spain's position in Africa. The only places where Spain had any reasonable chance of imposing protectionism were the Sahara and Equatorial Guinea, and it is noticeable that in relation to these two areas the Africanistas expressed protectionist views. Elsewhere, and especially in Morocco and the Congo estuary, there was no chance at this time of imposing Spanish sovereignty. Therefore the best way to protect existing Spanish commercial interests was to prevent other powers from taking protectionist measures. In this context, Spanish support for an 'open door' policy in both these areas made a great deal of sense.³⁶

The Iberian participation in the scramble for Africa would seem to illustrate a paradoxical 'law' of imperialism, which is in direct contradiction to Leninist theories and can be expressed as follows: the poorer a colonial power, the greater the economic motivations for imperial expansion. In Portugal and Spain, colonies were seen as a condition for economic survival. In other words, colonial expansion was essentially an extension of the protectionist reflex of less developed capitalist states during a period of economic recession. Pursuing this point further, one could say that the colonial

³⁴ Ibid.; J. Maluquer de Motes Bernet, 'El Mercado colonial antillano en el siglo XIX', in J. Nadal and G. Tortella (eds.), *Agricultura, comercio colonial y crecimiento en la España contemporánea*, Barcelona 1974, pp. 322-57; N. Cushner, *Spain in the Philippines*, Manila 1971, p. 209.

³⁵ J. Vicens i Vives and M. Llorens, *Industrials i politics del segle 19*, Barcelona 1961, 2nd edn., pp. 92, 332 and 370-1; I. Maluquer de Motes Bernet, 'La Burgesia

catalana i l'esclavitud colonial', in: *Recerques*, 3 (1974), pp. 91-123, p. 109 n. 90; Cushner, *Spain*, p. 204; Lécuyer and Serrano, *La Guerre d'Afrique*, pp. 273-6; Hahs, 'Spain and the Scramble', p. 278.

³⁶ Lécuyer and Serrano, *La Guerre d'Afrique*, p. 249 and part 3 *passim*; Bogard, 'Africanismo', p. 100 and *passim*.

expansion of advanced capitalist countries was in essence a defensive reflex against the aggressive protectionism of weaker states, with the lions stirring in reaction to the jackals.

This raises one final point: to what extent were the perceptions and expectations of the ruling class in Iberia correct? Here Jacques Marseille's path-breaking study of French imperialism can be applied to the Iberian case. Marseille argues that for France the modern colonial empire played three main roles. It acted as a buffer for the more dynamic sectors of the French economy in times of slump, but only then. The imperial market also protected the weaker and declining branches of the economy, and artificially kept them going as inefficient producers. Moreover, public investment in the colonies was probably a net drain on fixed capital formation at home. These latter two phenomena had a negative long-term impact on the whole economy. Far from assisting late-industrializing poorer countries to 'catch up', imperialism tended to keep them as retarded capitalist nations.³⁷ My own work on the Portuguese empire supports Marseille's tentative conclusions, and it is noteworthy that the Spanish economy entered into a period of sustained and rapid growth after the loss of its major colonies in 1898.³⁸

³⁷ J. Marseille, *Empire colonial et capitalisme français*, Paris 1984.

³⁸ Clarence-Smith, *The Third Portuguese Empire*; Carr, *Spain*, p. 389.

Leopold II and the *Association Internationale du Congo**

JEAN STENGERS

The creation of the Congo was the personal adventure of one man. Leopold II is one of those personalities who most aptly correspond to our notion of 'great men', if by this notion we want to describe those who, disregarding all moral considerations, have done great things which essentially sprang from their own personality. It is difficult to imagine how the Congo would have appeared on the map of Africa without him, because no specifically African traits, no kind of really indigenous element can be discerned in the state which he founded at the end of the nineteenth century. Without him there would not have been any Belgian initiative in Africa. It is pointless to search for another potential instigator.

There was no exterior force which pushed him into action. His own country played no role, for Belgian public opinion was marked by indifference, if not irony: there were smiles about the king's 'pet project'. Neither did representatives of the Belgian economy play any significant role. They little favoured the sort of enterprise of which their king's dreams were made. When in 1878 Leopold II instituted the *Comité d'Études du Haut-Congo*, whose task was to finance Stanley's expedition, he experienced all sorts of trouble in trying to find subscribers, and even those who did in the end subscribe largely did so as a favour to their sovereign. Neither did his immediate entourage have any noticeable impact. On the contrary, the court was far from enthusiastic; there were fears that the king could ruin himself and the thought prevailed that the predictable failure of his ventures in Africa could endanger his position as the Belgian sovereign. Neither would the contemporaneous climate of political and economic thought have influenced him. When he launched his colonial enterprise in about 1860, the prevailing school of thought, especially amongst economists, was quite clearly one of anti-colonialism.¹

But might there not have been objective factors which influenced his action? First of all we must eliminate the factor of emigration which played a role in other countries. In Belgium this did not count. 'The Belgians do not emigrate', noted the future Leopold II in 1865, just a few months before his enthronement.² But did not the general economic situation of the country call for some kind of colonial initiative? Leopold II certainly thought so, quite strongly in fact. He was thoroughly convinced that, from an economic point of view, Belgium needed an overseas 'extension'. Yet it must be

*Translated by Kaspar von Greyerz

¹ J. Stengers, 'L'Anticolonialisme libéral du XIX^e siècle et son influence en Belgique', in *L'Expansion belge sous Léopold I^{er}, 1831-1865: Recueil d'études*, Brussels 1965, pp. 404-43.

² Note of 20 May 1865 in L. Le Febvre de Vivy,

Documents d'histoire précoloniale belge, 1861-1865: Les idées coloniales de Léopold, duc de Brabant, Brussels 1955, pp. 33 and 34. This remark applied to transoceanic emigration, not to migrations to neighbouring countries like France; see J. Stengers, *Emigration et immigration en Belgique au XIX^e et au XX^e siècles*, Brussels 1978, p. 52.

stressed that he was practically the only one who defended such an analysis. The ruling political and economic groups in Belgium did not share his outlook. The consensus of the day was that Belgium's economic development was going ahead quite satisfactorily and that overseas 'adventures' would be more dangerous than profitable. There was no element in the Belgian situation, on the other hand, which would have incited Leopold II to concentrate on Central Africa, since Belgium had no interests in that area. Indeed it is significant in this respect that there were no voices of protest in Belgium against the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty of 1884. There were no Belgian interests to defend in the regions covered by this treaty. Everything therefore depended on one man, on him alone, on his ideas: his absolute and unassailable colonialist faith was decisive. There have been few moments in history when the outcome of an enterprise has depended so greatly on an idea.

The *Association Internationale du Congo* (AIC), which reached its apogee in the years 1884-5, can be considered a symbol and an illustration of the personal character of the undertaking. The AIC was mentioned from October 1882 onwards.³ It was this association which in 1884-5 was successively recognized as a sovereign power by the United States of America, by Germany, and then by the other countries participating at the Berlin Conference, and which—once it was recognized—adhered to the general act of the Berlin Conference. But who was Leopold II associated with in this association? With nobody, for the AIC was a purely fictitious organization. It was merely a label, behind which there was no one but Leopold II.

In order to understand the reasons for Leopold II's success and also, at least in part, for his failures, we must try to distinguish his trump cards from his handicaps. As for the strong points regarding the African undertaking some were present from the outset.

I

We must first of all look at the man himself, at his personality and his character. He had faith. He believed that overseas possessions by definition should and must be profitable. This was a conviction he had had since his youth, one which he never discarded and which remained utterly unassailable.⁴ This explains his life-long incessant search for overseas acquisitions throughout the whole world. Even in 1876 when he launched the great African adventure through the *Conférence de Géographie*, he was interested in the acquisition of parts of Borneo, of Tonking, and of the Chio and Mytilene Islands in the eastern Mediterranean.⁵ His faith gave support to his will-power throughout. His success in the Congo was preceded by a whole series of initiatives which often went very far, but which all turned out to be failures; this,

³ The first mention of the AIC occurs in a letter of Leopold to Strauch of 9 Oct. 1882: Brussels, Archives du Minist. des Affaires Étrangères (AMAE), Strauch Papers. See J. Stengers, 'Léopold II et la rivalité franco-anglaise en Afrique, 1882-1884', in *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, 47 (1969), pp. 425-79, here p. 434, and 'King Leopold and Anglo-French Rivalry, 1882-1884', in P. Gifford and R. Louis (eds.), *France and Britain in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule*, New Haven 1971, pp. 121-66, here pp. 128-9.

⁴ L. Le Febvre de Vivry, *Documents d'histoire précoloniale*; J. Stengers, 'Léopold II et le modèle colonial hollandais', in *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, 90 (1977), pp. 46-71.

⁵ Borneo and Tonking: see J. Stengers, 'Léopold II entre l'Extrême-Orient et l'Afrique, 1875-1876', in *La Conférence de Géographie de 1876: Recueil d'études*, Brussels 1976, pp. 325-8 and 342-3. Chio and Mytilene Islands: offer to buy them from Turkey for £100,000, in a letter from Leopold to Solvyns, 2 July 1876 (private collection).

however, did not discourage him. He put great dedication and an incredible amount of work into his efforts; his correspondence reached such monumental proportions that it will probably never be possible to publish it entirely. He wrote abundantly, well, and also elegantly, while in his personal contacts he could also be charming, knowing how to convince and to seduce. The manner in which he received his guests during the *Conférence de Géographie* in 1876 was one of the important factors in his initial success. He would pursue certain fundamental goals at all times and with great tenacity. (Colonial aims, it must be stressed, were not his only ones, he also concerned himself assiduously with national defence and the general improvement of his country.) However, in order to reach his goals, he knew how to change horses in full pursuit and to adapt his means to circumstances and the necessities of the moment. The following contains one or two striking illustrations of his talent for adaptation.

We must nevertheless avoid the illusion that he was just a kind of 'winner' who succeeds by definition. In the last resort he was really only successful in the Congo and, as we shall see, even this success only came about because he made promises which bordered on semi-madness or at least a lack of awareness. Everywhere else in the world his colonial efforts floundered, notably the formidable efforts he made for many long years and at considerable cost on the Upper Nile. It must be emphasized, however, that this only applies to his attempts at territorial acquisition. In China, on the other hand, Leopold II was successful in some remarkable deals.⁶ Nevertheless, had it not been for the success in the Congo, Leopold II would have become stigmatized by posterity as a bizarre king, haunted all his life by an idea which he did not manage to put into action. It was really only because of the Congo that he was able to pass down a different image to our age.

II

The king's second major trump card was the prestige and the advantages he was able to derive from his position as sovereign. He was not only a monarch, but also—at least at the time of the creation of the Congo—a unanimously respected king. He was treated with reverence everywhere. By virtue of his position he was able to negotiate directly with foreign heads of state and governments. What other explanation can there be for the fact that Jules Ferry personally received with great affability at the Quai d'Orsay a Parisian art dealer and entered into negotiations with him regarding Central Africa, than that this salesman, Arthur Stevens, was the personal envoy of His Majesty the king of the Belgians? What is more, as king, Leopold II was able to negotiate his favours for the price of the personal dedication of his entourage. A man like Mackinnon, for example, revered him immensely and rendered him great services, notably because he felt greatly flattered by the attention the king paid him.⁷ The case of the banker Bleichröder, who served the king in his relations with Bismarck, was certainly no different.⁸

⁶ The fundamental work for this theme is G. Kurgan-Van Hentenryk, *Léopold II et les groupes financiers belges en Chine: la politique royale et ses prolongements, 1895-1914*, Brussels 1972.

⁷ R. T. Anstey, *Britain and the Congo in the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford 1962, *passim*, and my review of Anstey

in *Journal of African History*, 5 (1964), pp. 304-8.

⁸ M. Luwel, 'Gerson von Bleichröder, l'ami commun de Léopold II et de Bismarck', in *Africa-Tervuren*, 11 (1965), pp. 93-110; F. Stern, *Gold and Iron: Bismarck, Bleichröder and the Building of the German Empire*, London 1977, pp. 402-9.

This king was the sovereign of a small, neutral, and unaffiliated state. Furthermore the years 1876–85 constituted a period of untroubled relations between Belgium and the great powers. For Leopold II this was a particularly happy coincidence, for only shortly before that, in 1875, there had been tensions between Belgium and Germany, largely due to the *Kulturkampf*,⁹ and Bismarck's support, which was so precious and crucial to Leopold II, certainly would not have been so forthcoming.

There was also a sort of paradoxical situation which is worth emphasizing: Leopold II was able to derive considerable advantage from his position as sovereign, but he did not suffer any of the handicaps which could have resulted from the way the Belgian constitution defined the king's powers. While it was the king of the Belgians who appeared to the public as the creator of the Congo, legally speaking he did not act as king, but as a private individual. As far as the Belgian government was concerned, what Leopold II did in Africa he only did as a private entrepreneur; thus the government did not need to get mixed up in it. In fact, with a few exceptions, the king did not regularly inform his ministers about the development of his undertaking. It was the daily papers which informed them of news regarding the Right of Preference, or the recognition of the AIC by the United States of America. As king of the Belgians Leopold II was bound by constitutional rules which he scrupulously adhered to. I would in fact consider him the Belgian sovereign who most profoundly believed in the virtues of constitutional monarchy. In Belgium itself he could not even appoint the director of a music school without the agreement of the minister in charge. But at the same time he was able to create an empire without even speaking to his ministers.

III

Partly due to his position as sovereign, the king could rely on a number of collaborators of high standing. From a diplomatic point of view the support he received from Lambermont, the secretary-general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and from Emile Banning, director-general at the same ministry, is well known. It is worth looking, however briefly, at the role of these two men. The posthumous reputation of Banning is clearly more considerable than that of Lambermont, largely due to the fact that he has left us some important writings, while Lambermont published nothing.¹⁰ But from our point of view Banning's role was in fact of secondary importance to that of Lambermont. This also applies to the Berlin Conference. The Baron de Courcel declared in March 1885 that 'without the Baron Lambermont the conference, instead of passing a worthwhile general agreement, would have probably passed only a number of inconsequential declarations'.¹¹ 'You are the lion of the conference'—this is what the secretary of the Royal Cabinet wrote to Lambermont on 5 December 1884.¹²

⁹ F. De Lannoy, *Un incident diplomatique germano-belge à propos du Kulturkampf*, Schaerbeek 1929; R. Demoulin, 'La Belgique et la crise internationale de 1875', in *L'Église et l'État à l'époque contemporaine: Mélanges dédiés à la mémoire de Mgr Alois Simon*, Brussels 1975, pp. 149–76.

¹⁰ Emile Banning figures prominently, for instance, in the gallery of *Les Techniciens de la colonisation, XIX^e–XX^e*

siècles, Paris 1946 (chapter by Jean Bruhat, pp. 35–54).

¹¹ Victor Gantier (quoting Courcel) to Lambermont, 13 Mar. 1885; Brussels, AMAE, *Afrique: Conférence Africaine de Berlin*, vol. 3.

¹² Count de Borchgrave to Lambermont, 5 Dec. 1884; Brussels, AMAE, Lambermont Papers.

It was on him that the king effectively depended for the defence of his interests in Berlin. He wrote to Lambermont at the beginning of December 1884: 'please be sure to instruct Strauch to use Sanford wherever the opportunity arises'.¹³ Lambermont was thus clearly in charge of the manoeuvre. Banning, on the other hand, while actively seconding Lambermont during the Conference, spent most of his time clearing up various technical points.

Abroad, again on the diplomatic level, the king often employed Belgian diplomats, passing on instructions to them without informing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Occasionally this created delicate problems for the diplomats in question, especially when they felt that what the king demanded of them might be dangerous to Belgium. In 1882, for example, the king asked Solvyns, the Belgian minister in London, to intervene at the Foreign Office and persuade the British to take action against Brazza. But Solvyns kept well out of this affair.¹⁴ Occasionally, the work of Belgian diplomats abroad was backed up by Leopold II's personal and direct agents. In Paris there was Arthur Stevens, who regularly visited the Quai d'Orsay. In Washington, Sanford, retired American minister to Brussels, led with incomparable assiduity the campaign which led to the recognition of the AIC by the United States in April 1884.

In Brussels, Leopold II had a small office which dealt with the organization of his African enterprise. This office was headed in turn by Greindl, then by Strauch (who was to be given the title 'President' of the AIC). Unlike Greindl, who left the king's entourage because he could not believe in the possibility of success in Africa, Strauch shared the king's faith. He was certainly the first collaborator in whom Leopold II really succeeded in implanting his beliefs. Strauch proved to be a first-class organizer. 'Our enterprise owes everything to you', Leopold II enthusiastically wrote to him.¹⁵

In Africa there was Stanley. Although Leopold II has frequently been praised for allegedly being the only man in Europe to recognize the immense economic potential of the Congo, this is really a misconception because Leopold II involved himself in the Congo without knowing anything about it. However, he did prove his particular astuteness in recognizing that in order to control the Congo he must have Stanley on his side, since Stanley was the only one who could turn his dreams into reality. In employing Stanley he took a risk, for the man's reputation was certainly not untarnished, particularly as regards his alleged brutality. But once in the king's service Stanley made a point of behaving as peaceably as possible and avoided, wherever he could, direct conflicts with the tribal chiefs and the indigenous population. In November 1881 he wrote: 'not one shot has been fired in the expedition to hurt a living soul, purposely or accidentally, this is a great triumph'.¹⁶ For that period, it is evident that the classic portrayal which contrasts Brazza and Stanley does not hold true.

¹³ Leopold to Lambermont, 4 Dec. 1884; Brussels, AMAE, Lambermont Papers.

¹⁴ J. Stengers, 'Léopold II et Brazza en 1882: Documents inédits', in *Revue française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer*, 63 (1976), pp. 105-36, here pp. 107-8 and 125-7.

¹⁵ 18 Apr. 1882; J. Stengers, 'Rapport sur le dossier: Correspondance Léopold II-Strauch', in *Bulletin de l'Institut Royal Colonial Belge*, 24 (1953), pp. 575-82, here p. 580. See also A. de Selliers de Moranville, 'Un fonds d'archives nouveau pour l'histoire du Congo', in *Bulletin de l'Académie Royale des Sciences d'Outre-Mer*, 9 (1963), pp. 308-24, here pp. 310-12.

¹⁶ A. Maurice (ed.), *H. M. Stanley: Unpublished Letters*,

London, n.d., p. 91; see also J. Stengers, 'Quelques observations sur la correspondance de Stanley', in *Zaire*, 9 (1955), pp. 899-927, here p. 915. In 1882, the short interval during which Dr Pechuel-Loesche replaced Stanley at the head of the expedition was marked by a number of violences. As Stanley himself wrote of Pechuel-Loesche, 'in his four month's service he continued to have more quarrels, disputes, war, burnings of villages and troubles of all kinds, than all the other years together which the Congo expedition can show' (Stanley to Rohlf, 26 Nov. 1885; Vegesack-Bremen, Heimatmuseum, Rohlf's Papers). When back in Africa in Dec. 1882, Stanley restored the situation.

Stanley was not free to act as he pleased since the king regularly supplied him with detailed instructions. Thus Leopold II personally held the reins of the whole enterprise and took charge of every detail on a daily basis, and with great diligence at that. Occasionally he would even take specific initiatives without consulting anybody (this was the case with the agreement with France on the right of preference, in which he did not involve Lambermont, his regular diplomatic consultant).¹⁷ But generally speaking he relied on his collaborators; the great value of these men for him lay not only in the fact that he could count on their personal loyalty. He also knew that they had sufficient personality to resist certain of his ideas if necessary.

The negotiations at the Berlin Conference may serve as an illustration in this respect. When the territorial interests were being negotiated, the king wanted to obtain Kabinda at all costs, since he saw this as indispensable for the future recruitment of soldiers and workers. The Portuguese resisted, arguing that Kabinda was cited in the Portuguese constitution. In a letter to Lambermont written on 22 January 1885 Leopold II wrote: 'if the Portuguese insist on retaining Kabinda because it is mentioned in their constitution, the name Kabinda could be given to a spot situated between the Tchiloango and the Louemmé, and the present Kabinda could then be renamed'.¹⁸ At the end of January 1885 he instructed Lambermont and Strauch to warn the English and the Germans that if he did not obtain Kabinda he would leave Africa altogether.¹⁹ In the event, Lambermont and Strauch decided not to pass on this threat. They decided instead to change the king's mind, and they succeeded.²⁰ In fact, during the course of the Conference, Strauch himself was to take a rather bold initiative. At the beginning of February 1885 spread the news that the Portuguese had occupied the Congo estuary. This was a hoax which was to create a considerable stir. Strauch had fabricated it deliberately to provoke an anti-Portuguese reaction. Only after the fact did he inform the king of his own coup, of which he was very proud.²¹

To sum up this third point, it can be said that Leopold had some remarkable servants.

IV

Leopold II had important means at his disposal in the form of his personal fortune. It was very considerable. Its extent is not fully known, but it seems that at some stage it actually came to be much superior to 50 million francs.²² In 1881, a year for which we have more specific information, the value of his personal *portefeuille* was in the region of 25 to 30 million, which assured him of returns of at least one million. To this must be

¹⁷ J. Stengers, 'Léopold II et la rivalité franco-anglaise', p. 471; 'King Leopold and Anglo-French Rivalry', p. 160.

¹⁸ Brussels, AMAE, Lambermont Papers.

¹⁹ To Lambermont, 31 Jan. 1885; Brussels, AMAE, Lambermont Papers. To Strauch, 31 Jan. 1885, *ibid.*, Strauch Papers.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Lambermont Papers. King Leopold's threat—a solemn announcement that he intended to leave Africa—was a very serious one, for he acquainted also his Prime Minister, Frère-Orban, with it. N. Lubelski-Bernard, *Léopold II et le cabinet Frère-Orban*,

1878-1884: *Correspondance entre le Roi et ses ministres*, 2 vols., Louvain-Brussels 1983, vol. 1, p. 374.

²¹ Strauch to Leopold, 6 Feb. 1885; Brussels, Archives des Palais royaux (APR). The Problem of the 'Portuguese occupation of the Lower Congo' is discussed by F. Latour da Veiga Pinto, *Le Portugal et le Congo au XIX^e siècle*, Paris 1972, pp. 285 ff., who does not suspect, any more than the contemporaries did, that this was a 'coup' by Strauch.

²² J. Stengers, 'Léopold II et le patrimoine dynastique', in *Académie Royale de Belgique: Bulletin de la Classe des Lettres et des Sciences morales et politiques*, 5th series, 58 (1972), pp. 63-134, here pp. 93-4.

added the revenue from his real estate which certainly exceeded 200,000 francs.²³ It was this personal fortune which allowed him to finance his African enterprise. Apart from some 400,000 francs raised in 1878 in subscriptions to the *Comité d'Études du Haut-Congo*, Leopold II personally covered all other costs accrued in the Congo. In 1883 these amounted to 2.5 million francs in one year alone, and the figures for the two following years were certainly no lower. By 1885 the king had thus paid out a total of about 11.5 million Francs.²⁴ This forced him to take on loans. In July 1885 he confided in Strauch that his debt amounted to about 4 million.²⁵ In September 1885 his account with the Rothschild Bank, which became his main creditor at least from 1881 onwards, was overdrawn by certainly no less than 2.7 million francs.²⁶ However, it would be wrong to link the successful creation of the Congo with the image of a thoroughly indebted king. Leopold II clearly preferred to borrow rather than to sell off property or shares. Nevertheless, the Congo adventure bit deeply into his fortune. This explains why he was so keen to make France pay an indemnity for his abandoning the Niari-Kwilu. This was a region which Leopold II considered to be particularly rich in resources. What is more, its occupation had been very costly due to the creation of a number of stations. So when, at the end of 1884, the French demanded that the Niari-Kwilu be passed on to them, he insisted on an indemnity amounting to five million. In order to obtain this sum he thought up an ingenious procedure: he claimed that he had 'mortgaged' the Niari-Kwilu at a cost of five million.²⁷ This was, of course, pure fiction, but he imagined that in this way he could force the French into co-operation.²⁸ In the end it was all in vain since Jules Ferry resisted his pressure. In the end the only financial compensation offered to the AIC was the authority to hold a lottery in France (this was later transformed into an authority to raise money by way of subscriptions to a loan).

The inescapable impression as regards the creation of the Congo is that the king spent money at will. His own correspondence indicates that he would sometimes feel perplexed by his own expenditure. But his was not translated into immediate efforts to economize. The first imperative was to succeed. A striking contrast emerges from the king's competition with Brazza. Brazza depended on his limited credit which he often deemed insufficient. The king, on the other hand, could pay whatever was needed for the success of his policy. This gave Leopold II a clear advantage. In Europe he even started to take journalists onto his payroll. In 1884 he paid Hément, a journalist

²³ These calculations are based upon documents from a private collection which will be used extensively in a later study.

²⁴ J. Stengers, 'La Dette publique de l'État Indépendant du Congo', in *La Dette publique aux XVIII^e et XIX^e siècles: 9^e Colloque International, Spa, 12-16 Sept. 1978*, Brussels 1980, pp. 299-300.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 300.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ 'Les bouches du Congo si on nous les donne pour compenser perte du Kwilou ne paieront pas la dette de cette province . . . Nous devons rembourser cinq millions aux banquiers . . . Les banquiers [ont prêté] cinq millions sur le Kwilou' (telegram of Leopold to Strauch, Dec. 1884; Brussels, AMAE, Lambermont Papers,

volume of undated documents, no. 103). This is a lament, and naturally also a claim, which the king spreads in all directions. 'L'Association lutte pour ne pas céder le Niari-Quillou à la France,' he writes to Queen Victoria. 'Elle ne pourra s'y résoudre . . . que si la France se charge de la dette de cette contrée' (Leopold to Victoria, 25 Dec. 1884; Windsor, Royal Archives, p. 19).

²⁸ 'Si les Français voulaient des territoires considérables, notre intérêt est de le leur faire payer . . . Nous pouvons soutenir que nous avons hypothéqué un gros emprunt sur tous ces riches terrains' (Leopold to Strauch, 8 Nov. 1884; Brussels, Musée de la Dynastie, Strauch Papers). 'Nous pouvons soutenir': this shows clearly how the 'trick' was born.

working for *Le Temps*, a monthly sum of 1,000 francs.²⁹ This was only a modest beginning; his unsurpassable success a few years later consisted in 'buying' the secretary-general of the *Comité de l'Afrique Française*, Harry Alis.³⁰

V

We should also mention Leopold II's reputation as a philanthropist. This is an absolutely fundamental point. This kind of image materialized during his first African initiatives (the *Conférence de Géographie* in 1876 and the *Association Internationale Africaine*) and he was clever enough to enhance it. He presented himself in a very credible manner as a generous and disinterested sovereign, who was taking civilization into Central Africa at his own cost. In his correspondence, in his personal contacts, as well as in the articles which he furnished to the press, he constantly elaborated on the theme of his humanitarian and civilizing mission. He liked to compare his association with the Red Cross. 'The Red Cross and the work of those ancient knights of St John and of Malta' had inspired him, as he wrote to Bleichröder in May 1883.³¹ The association was to become the 'Red Cross of Africa' and should, according to Leopold II, 'like the creation of Geneva become recognized by all civilized states'.³² The king thus succeeded in creating for himself an aura of real nobility and philanthropy. The only critical note which occasionally marred the general admiration for him was that he was often considered a rather naïve philanthropist, who might easily be ruined by his generosity. He was a 'dreamer' who pursued 'chimeras', wrote Jules Ferry.³³ Indeed, perhaps even many contemporaries came to feel for him a kind of 'sympathie de la condoléance'.³⁴ But at the end of the day the admiration for him was shared everywhere, not only officially, but also behind the scenes.

Let us first look at the official level. On 24 April 1884 Lord Granville, responding in the House of Lords to a question regarding the AIC, emphasized that the king 'had carried out the scheme on philanthropic grounds, with immense munificence'.³⁵ On 23 February 1885 Count de Launay, the Italian plenipotentiary, explained to the members of the Berlin Conference that the new state of the Congo was 'founded upon the good offices of a sovereign whose name will go down in history as that of one of the great humanitarian benefactors'.³⁶ In the private correspondence the testimonies are even more striking. Thus, Sir Bartle Frere wrote to Lord Northbrook on 22 February

²⁹ F. Bontinck, 'L'Entente entre la France et l'Association Internationale du Congo à la lumière des premières négociations', in *Université Louvain de Kinshasa: Études d'histoire africaine*, 7 vols., Kinshasa-Louvain-Paris 1971, vol. 2, pp. 29-81, here pp. 44-5.

³⁰ J. Stengers, 'Aux origines de Fachoda: L'expédition Monteil', in *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, 38 (1960), pp. 366-404, here pp. 383 ff.

³¹ M. Luwel, 'Gerson von Bleichröder', p. 96.

³² 'L'œuvre serait la Croix-Rouge de l'Afrique' (Strauch to Mackinnon, 29 Apr. 1883; London, School of Oriental and African Studies, Mackinnon Papers). 'Son œuvre s'inspire de celle de la Croix-Rouge et un jour, comme l'œuvre de Genève, sera reconnue par tous les États civilisés' (Note by the King, 1883, Brussels.

AMAE, *Afrique: Association Internationale du Congo*, vol. 4, no. 104). See also J. Stengers, 'Léopold II et la rivalité franco-anglaise', pp. 452-3, and 'King Leopold and Anglo-French Rivalry', pp. 144-5.

³³ Ferry to Courcel, 16 Dec. 1884, quoted by G. de Courcel, *L'Influence de la Conférence de Berlin de 1885 sur le droit colonial international*, Paris 1935, pp. 78-9 and 98-100.

³⁴ These were the very words used by Sir Edward Malet, the British plenipotentiary at Berlin, at the sitting of the Conference of 23 Feb. 1885 (*Protocoles et Acte Général de la Conférence de Berlin, 1884-1885*, Berlin 1885, p. 266).

³⁵ *The Times*, 24 Apr. 1884, p. 5.

³⁶ *Protocoles et Acte Général*, p. 272.

1883: 'His designs are most philanthropic and are amongst the few schemes of the kind which seem to be entirely free from any selfish commercial or political object'.³⁷ Or Jacob Bright to Emile de Laveleye on 13 March 1883: 'The generosity and public spirit of your King are admirable. It is a rare thing for a person in his position to make such sacrifices for the benefit of humanity.'³⁸ A Foreign Office memorandum by Pauncefote, dated 14 November 1884, states: 'Nobody doubts the aim [that is, its noble nature] which the King of the Belgians has had in view.'³⁹ On 5 January 1885 Mackinnon wrote to Hill: 'the noblest and most self-sacrificing scheme for Africa's development that has ever been or ever will be attempted'.⁴⁰

One of the several advantages which Leopold II could draw from this aura was the strong and even enthusiastic support he was able to solicit among Protestant missionaries. They were to plead energetically for the recognition of the sovereignty of the AIC.⁴¹ Here too we can find the key to the paradox presented by the case of a man like Emile de Laveleye. Emile de Laveleye was a professor at the University of Liège and was one of the most well-known Belgian economists of his day. Faithful to a tradition of liberal political economy he spoke up as a radical opponent of colonialism. His thoughts are summarized by a once famous formula: 'The states which do not have colonies should be grateful for this and those who do have them should be prepared to lose them, and even this loss will in the end be a gain.' But what did the author of this formula do in the end? He offered his assistance to Leopold II with a view to supporting to the best of his ability 'une noble et grand œuvre'.⁴² One of the words crucial to an understanding of the atmosphere of that period is *œuvre* ('good work'). Leopold II used it abundantly and his contemporaries believed in the *œuvre*.

All this, of course, poses great problems of interpretation. Was this incomparable triumph in the end based on nothing but hypocrisy? At first sight one might be tempted to think so. But viewed more closely the psychological reality seems to be more complex. From the start, from the moment he cast his eye over Central Africa, the king knew what he wanted: 'We must', he wrote, 'obtain a slice of this magnificent cake.'⁴³ This, quite evidently, was the basis of his thought. But at the same time—the phrase about the 'cake' dates from November 1877—the king thought that Africa should become better known and be explored, as it was a requisite for the 'particular enterprise' which he envisaged. In order to facilitate this exploration he believed—quite sincerely, I would have thought—in a formula of international

³⁷ Public Record Office, FO 84/1803.

³⁸ Brussels, Archives Générales du Royaume, *Acquisitions de la 4^e section*, no. 543.

³⁹ R. Louis, 'The Berlin Congo Conference', in Gifford and Louis, *France and Britain*, pp. 167–220, here p. 202 (and see Pauncefote's previous reference, when speaking of the association, to 'the noble aims of its founder'; *ibid.*, p. 201).

⁴⁰ F. Bontinck, *Aux origines de l'État Indépendant du Congo: Documents tirés d'archives américaines*, Louvain-Paris 1966, p. 276.

⁴¹ R. Slade, *English-speaking Missions in the Congo Independent State, 1878–1908*, Brussels 1959, ch. 1 and esp. pp. 72–3.

⁴² J. Stengers, 'Laveleye (Emile de)', in: *Biographie*

Coloniale Belge, 5 vols., Brussels 1956, vol. 4, cols. 484–97. In 1889 Emile de Laveleye still wrote: 'La création de l'État libre du Congo est une des œuvres les plus merveilleuses de notre temps' (*La Gazette*, 15 Apr. 1889). The king also still clung naturally to the same vocabulary when he sent to Laveleye 'tous ses remerciements pour l'appui que vous prêtez en toute circonstance à l'œuvre du Congo' (Count de Borchgrave to Laveleye, 18 July 1889; Brussels, Archives Générales du Royaume, *Acquisitions de la 4^e section*, n. 543).

⁴³ We cannot 'laisser échapper une bonne occasion de nous procurer une part de ce magnifique gâteau africain' (Leopold to Solvyns, 17 Nov. 1877, quoted by P. van Zuylen, *L'Échiquier congolais ou le secret du Roi*, Brussels 1959, p. 43).

co-operation : hence the *Conférence de Géographie* of 1876 and the subsequent creation of the *Association Internationale Africaine* (AIA), whose success the King was willing to ensure.⁴⁴ Since the AIA was an authentic *œuvre*, and of a scientific rather than political nature, Leopold II was able to refer to it in terms of philanthropy and *désintéressement*. I have no doubt that he did so sincerely. This was not total hypocrisy; rather he would put particular emphasis on one aspect of what he did while at the same time dissimulate the other (the 'particular enterprise'), which in his eyes was undoubtedly the more important of the two. The AIA went rather quickly into decline, but the king remained true to the kind of discourse linked with it. The gap between his rhetoric and the real nature of his enterprise thus became complete, but he could no longer break away from a kind of discourse which proved so helpful and won him so much applause, so much sympathy, and so much support.

The criterion he applied was clearly that of utilitarianism. It suffices here to cite just one among many other examples. In January, having failed to obtain the five million francs as an indemnity for the Niari-Kwilu, Leopold II proposed the idea of a lottery. In France, however, lotteries were reserved, in principle, for charities. But the king, as he himself claimed, clearly fulfilled these conditions. This was how his negotiator in Paris explained the situation to Lord Lyons, the British Ambassador: 'The King considered that the International Association was instituted in the true spirit of Christian charity and was pursuing objects highly beneficial to humanity.'⁴⁵ Thus he could not be denied his lottery.

Having considered all the trumps which Leopold II held at the beginning of his African enterprise, we must now consider those he acquired in the course of his undertaking. They were by no means unimportant.

1. He adopted after some time the only stance which could lead him to success in Africa: a political formula. Initially, Leopold II had doubts about the way he could proceed to a 'slicing of the cake', since he had not originally envisaged a territorial occupation. This would have necessitated a military conquest, for which the king did not have the necessary forces at his disposal.

The first concrete project which he elaborated in co-operation with Stanley in 1878 was to create the basis for a great 'Société de commerce et de navigation', its network to be comprised of the African stations Stanley was to found.⁴⁶ This was in fact a rather grandiose project. Leopold II envisaged a chain of commercial stations linking one ocean with the other, the Congo estuary with Zanzibar.⁴⁷ However, if Leopold II had indeed persevered in this direction (and all his initial instructions for Stanley show that he was willing to do so),⁴⁸ the final outcome would certainly have been catastrophic. In

⁴⁴ J. Stengers, 'Introduction' to *La Conférence de Géographie de 1876*, esp. pp. xvi-xvii.

⁴⁵ Lyons to Granville, 6 Jan. 1885; Public Record Office, FO 84/1819.

⁴⁶ J. Stengers, 'Léopold II et la rivalité franco-anglaise', pp. 431 ff., and 'King Leopold and Anglo-French Rivalry', pp. 126 ff.

⁴⁷ 'Vous savez que le plan général de l'Association internationale consiste à relier la côte orientale d'Afrique à la côte occidentale par une chaîne ininterrompue de stations hospitalières' (Strauch to Mackinnon, 17 Feb. 1880; London, School of Oriental and African Studies,

Mackinnon Papers; see also *ibid.* Strauch to Mackinnon, 16 and 20 Oct. 1879). 'Vous savez que je m'intéresse à une grande tentative en Afrique qui consiste à établir des stations sur le Congo, puis du Tanganyika à l'Océan pacifique' (Leopold to Lord Wolseley, 4 Jan. 1883, quoted by M. Luwel, 'Léopold II et son ami Lord Wolseley', in *Africa-Tervuren*, 11 (1965), pp. 29-39, here p. 30). 'Fonder une suite de stations sur cette grande ligne qui sépare en deux l'Afrique' (Leopold to Queen Victoria, 21 Jan. 1883; Windsor, Royal Archives, p. 19).

⁴⁸ J. Stengers, as quoted in n. 46.

the course of the political partitioning of Africa, which was in the making, the *Compagnie de Commerce* would sooner or later have fallen under the political control of European powers. Undoubtedly this would have been tantamount to the end, at least in part, of the privileges and monopolies of the *Compagnie*, that is, of the privileges and monopolies which Leopold II was hoping to acquire from tribal chiefs and which were supposed to form the basis of the association's prosperity (this was indeed the inherent objective in the first treaties concluded by Stanley with the tribal chiefs of the Congo)⁴⁹ and if this direction had been pursued it would clearly have been doomed. This initial commercial objective could only have been achieved if Central Africa had not been partitioned and if the European interest had remained purely commercial and had found the support of the indigenous sovereigns. Remarkably enough Leopold II initially tended to look at things in this perspective. In September 1882 he wrote to Ferdinand de Lesseps: 'We believe that it will be best for trade, peace and civilization, to maintain the autonomy of the indigenous states of the Congo by creating a few independent establishments there which would assist them and direct them towards progress.'⁵⁰ Leopold II's initial attitude was thus that of a kind of pre-imperialist. No rush for Central Africa had yet taken place. Stanley had been unsuccessful in trying to promote the English interest. Leopold II, too, at first did not think of being party to a scramble.

What saved him in the end, and made him give up an objective which would have ended in failure, was the new political approach chosen by France in 1882. The ratification by France of the Brazza-Makoko Treaty in the autumn of 1882 constituted a crucial turning point in every respect. It became clear that France was poised to penetrate Central Africa. There were clear indications that France was not going to be satisfied with the small piece of territory on the shore of Stanley Pool which it had gained through the Makoko Treaty. The prospect of French flags soon flying over the territories within which he had created his commercial stations seemed to Leopold II to be a deadly threat. The only way of stopping the expansion of French sovereignty was to oppose it through the prior rights of another sovereign organization. He could only save himself by acquiring political rights and rights of sovereignty. At the end of 1882 Leopold II decisively took his course. Henceforth in Africa new types of treaties were negotiated with the indigenous tribal chiefs; these were treaties transferring rights of sovereignty. Leopold II was now to claim 'independence'.⁵¹ Within the space of little more than a year he rather rapidly enhanced his claims. In November 1882 he demanded the recognition of his 'free towns' (his commercial stations created in the Congo), and by February 1883 was requesting 'free stations and territories'. In November 1883 he was talking about the 'free states of the Congo', only to wind up by finally claiming 'the Free State of the Congo' in January 1884.⁵²

However, the path towards the recognition of such claims was paved with considerable obstacles, although the validity of the treaties concluded with the indigenous tribal chiefs was not really at issue. The problem was that it seemed impossible to recognize the sovereignty of a private company. This unleashed some

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ J. Stengers, 'Léopold II et Brazza', pp. 118-19; see also p. 121 and 122.

⁵¹ J. Stengers, 'Léopold II et la rivalité franco-

anglaise', pp. 448 ff., and 'King Leopold and Anglo-French Rivalry', pp. 140 ff.

⁵² Ibid.

great legal controversies and Leopold II was lucky enough to find some supporters within the legal profession. In the end, however, the real debate did not take place on a legal level. Once a certain number of countries had decided that from a political and economic point of view recognition of the sovereignty of the AIC was a wise move, all the legal difficulties were sidestepped. The latter were merely an excuse for saying no until the decision had been made to say yes. The first government to do so was that of the United States; in April 1884 it recognized the flag of the AIC as equal to that of any 'friendly government'.

2. Second we must consider the promise of freedom of trade which gave Leopold II the aura of a champion of commercial freedom in Central Africa. This was without doubt the key to Leopold's success. The king's thinking in this respect underwent some extraordinary changes. At the beginning of his African enterprise, when the objective was the creation of a large commercial company, he sought to acquire a maximum of monopolies and exclusive rights through the treaties negotiated by Stanley. He then, all of a sudden, joined the opposite camp and became a promoter of commercial freedom of trade. This, as we know, occurred in April 1883. This sudden change was made possible by the fact that the king had, provisionally at least, discarded his initial commercial objectives and had come to concentrate on the acquisition of political rights. On the political level he thus found himself in competition not only with Portugal, but also with France, that is with two countries whose colonial rights to raise customs duties could inspire fear. Faced with both the French and the Portuguese, the best way of securing the support of other countries, and especially their merchants, was to proclaim that in his colonies no duties would be levied. It seems that this reaction was triggered off by a letter from one of his most influential British allies, Sir John Kirk, who recommended this policy on 4 April 1883.⁵³ Two days later the head of the King's cabinet wrote to Sir John Kirk: 'His Majesty wants me to tell you confidentially that if England, alone or with other powers, were willing to proclaim the neutrality of the mouths of the Congo and to acknowledge the neutrality of our stations, we would take the engagement not to establish customs or any tax on our roads.'⁵⁴ This promise was later to be repeated with more and more emphasis in letters written to Mackinnon and Bleichröder on 29 April 1883 and 4 May 1883 respectively. Mackinnon was informed that 'our stations will undertake not to levy any duties throughout their territories, nor any taxes on the international national road which will connect them';⁵⁵ and Bleichröder was told that 'acts of neutralization are proclamations which entail neither expenses, nor financial liability, nor responsibility on the part of the states which pronounce them; we will respond to this by a formal promise not to have any duties levied by our stations, nor any tax on the international road.'⁵⁶ In 1884 all this was to become hypostasized in the formula 'state without duties', whose diffusion Leopold actively organized. It was this simple formula which led him to his triumph.

A number of observations can be made in this respect.

⁵³ Analysis of this letter in the summaries compiled by Charles Notté, Brussels, Archives Générales du Royaume, Droogmans Papers (see on these summaries J. Stengers, 'Léopold II et Brazza', pp. 106-7). On Sir John Kirk and Leopold, see R. Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*. Kirk asked Devaux to assure the king 'that I have never ceased to interest myself in advancing his views and the good cause he has taken upon himself'

(Kirk to Devaux, 21 Mar. 1883, Brussels, APR Congo, n. 70).

⁵⁴ Devaux to Kirk, 6 Apr. 1883; Brussels, APR Congo, no. 1.

⁵⁵ Strauch to Mackinnon, 29 Apr. 1883; London, School of Oriental and African Studies, Mackinnon Papers.

⁵⁶ M. Luwel, 'Gerson von Bleichröder', pp. 96-7.

(a) Leopold II was the father of colonization without duties. It appears that nobody had this idea before him and for good reasons: it was a rather crazy proposal since it is difficult to see how a colony could survive financially without levying duties. However, Leopold II's formula needs to be qualified, because it only excluded import duties. There thus remained the possibility of levying duties on exports, although this does not greatly mitigate the impression that this was a fundamentally unrealistic formula, since any colony, at least in its initial phase, must be able to count on its import duties.

(b) Leopold II's formula was to have a considerable echo. It was acclaimed within Europe's business circles. The formula was not mentioned directly in the invitation to the Berlin Conference, for this invitation concentrated on the understanding to be reached regarding 'freedom of trade' in the Congo Basin, but this notion of 'freedom of trade' was quite clearly styled according to Leopold II's formula, and the latter was indeed adopted during the course of the Conference. Since the establishment of freedom of commerce was the major reason for calling the Conference, it can be claimed without exaggeration that Leopold II was also the spiritual father of the Conference itself.

(c) Freedom of commerce with an absence of all import duties was the bait with which Leopold II successfully lured the great powers. Hence the recognition of the AIC by the United States and, following that, Bismarck's approval and recognition by Germany, which was decisive. Attention must be drawn here to a crucial text, namely the words spoken by Bismarck when he received the French ambassador, Courcel, at Varzin on 27 August 1884. Courcel reported:

The Prince von Bismarck showed me a map he had received from King Leopold. It showed the territory within which the Belgian association wants to constitute a sovereign state. This is a huge quadrangle covering the entire bend of the Upper Congo, that is, the entire river from the cataracts in the West to the region of the Great Lakes in the East, in other words, all of Central Africa, the very heart of the continent. It is indeed vast, confirmed the Prince-Chancellor, but it is not up to us to hold back his ambition, once the *Société* guarantees freedom of commerce and that the benefit to us from application of this principle increases with the size of the Company's operations.⁵⁷

The key words here are 'the benefit increases': Leopold II is clearly seen as a man who works at his own cost for the benefit of all.

(d) At this juncture we must once again question the king's sincerity. When he made these promises, was Leopold II really sincere, did he actually intend to keep them? At first sight and for two reasons there are grounds for doubt. First, it would seem that Leopold must have been aware that he would be unable to keep his promises; logically they would have brought about the ruin of the state he was about to found. This was the logic that was perceived by those Belgian politicians who, in 1885, when Leopold II asked the Belgian Parliament to recognize his sovereignty over the independent state of the Congo, only agreed with reluctance and with severe misgivings. They obviously thought that Leopold II would be doomed as the head of a state which had signed away its normal means of existence.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ J. Stengers, 'Léopold II et la rivalité franco-anglaise', pp. 475-6, and 'King Leopold and Anglo-French Rivalry', pp. 163-4.

⁵⁸ Jules Bara, one of the most influential Liberal politicians, was heard to say 'que si l'Acte de Berlin avait

permis à l'État du Congo d'exister, il ne lui avait pas laissé de quoi vivre' (J. Van den Heuvel, 'Auguste Beernaert', in *Revue générale*, Nov. 1912, pp. 641-65, here p. 653).

The second, and with hindsight the main reason for doubting the king's sincerity was the extraordinarily skilful way in which, from 1890 onwards, Leopold II succeeded in changing his commitments and in establishing in the Congo a commercial quasi-monopoly held by the state—the *régime domanial*—which strangled freedom of commerce. However, I believe that we are wrong to doubt the king's sincerity in this instance. We clearly need to familiarize ourselves with the prevailing atmosphere at that time. Leopold II, a comparatively small sovereign, signed very strict treaties with the great powers (the treaties recognizing the AIC) and he became co-signatory to a particularly solemn international convention, the Act of Berlin: how could he possibly envisage a future that would allow him to break his promises? There is no indication that at this time he had the slightest premonition of the 'trick' (the *régime domanial*) which was later to enable him to do so. To plead in favour of the king's sincerity, as I believe we must, is in fact tantamount to saying that he was not completely conscious of his actions. His faith in colonialism was indeed such that it outstripped any logical reasoning. His personal credo, which dominated all his thoughts and actions, was that colonization *must* be successful and a source of riches if a colony was to be properly exploited.

3. We should also take note of a tactical manoeuvre which was to produce an important strategic advantage, even though, originally, this was not foreseen by the king: the granting to France of the Right of Preference in April 1884. Let us try to recall what this right consisted of. The AIC committed itself, in the event of its having to sell off its possessions, to accord the Right of Preference to France. This was also synonymously called 'Right of Pre-emption'. The king offered this right to France, even though the latter had not asked for it. He explained to Lambermont that this gesture was in fact 'directed at the Portuguese to force them to come to terms with us'.⁵⁹

Following the ratification of the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty in February 1884, Leopold II clearly expected the Portuguese to occupy the Congo estuary in accordance with the treaty. He would thus have to negotiate with them the right of passage through their territory. In these negotiations Leopold wanted to be able to tell the Portuguese that if their conditions were not acceptable he would withdraw completely and that in this case his place would be taken by the French, in other words, by much tougher negotiators.⁶⁰ However, these efforts were in vain since the negotiations he anticipated did not take place. The Anglo-Portuguese treaty, as it turned out, was never implemented. But even though his strategem thus became useless as a tactical ploy, the Right of Preference nevertheless became a considerable strategic advantage, even though the king did not initially foresee this. It did not, of course, improve his relations with Great Britain. The British government was extremely irritated by the Right of Preference and continued to feel that way. But it was to play a very crucial role in relations with Germany and France. It was with Bismarck that Leopold II first negotiated recognition of the frontiers of his new state, since the recognition of the sovereignty of the AIC by the United States did not cover a specific territory. In

⁵⁹ Leopold to Lambermont, 13 May 1884; Brussels, AMAE, *Afrique, Association Internationale du Congo*, vol. 3.

⁶⁰ J. Stengers, 'Léopold II et la rivalité franco-anglaise', pp. 472-4, and 'King Leopold and Anglo-

French Rivalry', pp. 161-2. Contradicted by F. Bontinck, 'L'Entente entre la France et l'Association Internationale du Congo', p. 67, whose arguments do not convince me.

November 1884, after initial hesitation, Bismarck recognized a vast territory as being under the influence of the AIC, a territory which bore little resemblance to the modest area Leopold's agents had actually occupied. Why did Bismarck take this step? He did so mainly because he knew that France, from which he was trying to solicit co-operation in Africa at the time, would not, being the potential heir, object to such a considerable territorial expansion. And in February 1885 France, in turn, accorded Leopold II frontiers which were even more extensive than those recognized by Germany.⁶¹

We have thus surveyed the main trumps held by Leopold II. We must also, however, look at certain of his handicaps.

His major handicap, and it is as well to recognize it, was that he had to avoid any conflict with a foreign power and was not allowed openly to defy any foreign state. At the first sign of any such conflict, Belgian public opinion would turn against him. Belgians would see this as a threat to their neutrality which to them was sacrosanct above all else. The king would automatically be removed from any political influence. This was a fundamental factor which he had to include in his calculations.

Let us look at three cases which illustrate the obstacles that he faced.

First of all there was the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty. While Great Britain was negotiating with Portugal—and this took up quite a lengthy period of time—Leopold II used all the means at his disposal to try to prevent the conclusion of the treaty.⁶² In this attempt he relied heavily on his British friends who belonged to business, missionary, and philanthropic circles. It could be said that from his Brussels palace he played the role of main organizer of the campaign against the treaty. But once the treaty came into being, he stopped his campaign immediately. Once Great Britain had made her decision, the king did not for a moment consider opposing it, either openly or clandestinely. As the above discussion about the Right of Preference has shown, he now fully expected to negotiate with the Portuguese.

The second obstacle to be mentioned here was the Niari-Kwilu. Thanks to the many stations he had created there Leopold II held strong rights in this area. Nevertheless, when France voiced claims to this region he was unable to contemplate any resistance; he could only go as far as trying to claim financial compensation.

Thirdly, there were the negotiations with Bismarck regarding recognition of the territorial boundaries of the AIC. In May and June 1884, during the course of his first contacts with Germany on this question, the king claimed, apart from 'certain provinces in Central Africa', a 'string of territories reaching to the Indian Ocean'. He wanted his own territories to link up with the 'possessions of the Sultan of Zanzibar'.⁶³ This was quite clearly a left-over from his earlier dream of creating a great commercial company controlling the space between the two oceans. Now he was thinking of a state controlling the same region. However, one single frown from Bismarck was enough to force Leopold II into retreat; henceforth he abstained from going in his claims beyond

⁶¹ J. Stengers, 'Léopold II et la fixation des frontières du Congo', in *Le Flambeau*, 46 (1963), pp. 153–200.

⁶² R. Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, gives the best general survey which can be complemented now by many new sources.

⁶³ 'Zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Kongostaates', in *Aus den Archiven des belgischen Kolonialministeriums*, 1st

series, Berlin 1918, pp. 69 and 73–4; J. Stengers, 'Léopold II et la fixation des frontières', pp. 172–4. The king also revealed his aims to Granville: 'Voulant faire traverser l'Afrique Centrale par une ligne de stations et de territoires libres et francs' (Leopold to Granville, 6 Mar. 1884; Public Record Office, Granville Papers, GD 29/156).

Lake Tanganyika. In short, although Leopold had considerable strength in Africa, including some notable military might, he was virtually unable to consider any military opposition to another state. Although he held significant legal titles, he was unable to insist on their validity if this could lead to open conflict with others.

Whatever his trumps and his handicaps, it is certainly clear that Leopold II achieved a remarkable success in 1884–5, especially if one considers the discrepancy between the state borders he had recognized by treaty and the region he effectively controlled through his territorial occupation. Yet the glare of his triumph should not be allowed to obscure two points: a considerable number of reliable observers, while they applauded the king's efforts, remained convinced that this noble philanthropist, who was perhaps rather too prone to chase after chimeras, could not in the end succeed with his enterprise. Thus Lister, a senior civil servant at the Foreign Office, noted in February 1885: 'No one supposes that the Association is likely to last long.'⁶⁴ And the American Minister in Paris wrote in January 1885: 'The French Foreign Office does not seem to have much confidence in the future of the Association. Mr Billot (the director of political affairs) fears that it is already short of money and he does not see from what quarter further funds will come.'⁶⁵ I have already characterized this attitude as 'sympathie de la condoléance'.

From a purely logical point of view this pessimism was entirely justified; logically Leopold II was bound to fail. In fact, he twice came very close to ruin. On the first occasion, in 1890, he was saved by Belgian financial aid. It is interesting to note in this connection that five years earlier he had announced that he would never ask for such aid, and here too I think that he was perfectly sincere. Later, when he was no longer able to rely on Belgian support, he was saved by the 'rubber miracle'. This unexpected and unforeseeable discovery of abundant natural resources which could be immediately exploited, transformed his financial misery into an extraordinary prosperity.⁶⁶

Leopold II was not a gambler, at least not in the classical sense of the term; he certainly never visited any casinos. But in political terms he clearly corresponded to the gambler who thinks he has found an infallible martingale—the colonial martingale. In the Congo he gambled and won.

⁶⁴ PRO, FO 84/1821.

⁶⁵ Morton to the Secretary of State, Paris, 8 Jan. 1885; Washington, National Archives. 'The chances of life of such a state in our century seem to be slim', wrote D. de Leon in 1886 ('The Conference at Berlin on the West African Question', in *Political Science Quarterly*, 1 (1886), pp. 103–39, here p. 136).

⁶⁶ J. Stengers, 'King Leopold's Congo', in *The Cambridge History of Africa*, 8 vols., Cambridge 1975–85, vol. 6: R. Oliver and G. N. Sanderson (eds.), *From 1870 to 1905*, Cambridge 1985, pp. 315–58, here pp. 318–20.

C

The Issues at the Conference

The Berlin Act of 26 February 1885*

GEOFFREY DE COURCEL

1. THE MEANING OF THE BERLIN CONFERENCE

An important factor behind the Berlin Conference of 1884 was a growing public interest in Africa arising from newspaper articles describing outstanding explorations and discoveries. Certain circles in a number of countries felt that, since most African territory was still unoccupied, some system of customs exemption should be introduced offering equality of treatment to all countries.

In Munich at a session of the Institute of International Law in September 1883, a report by Moynier entitled 'The Institute of International Law on the Congo Question' stated that: 'Arborer là-bas le drapeau du libre-échange, du libre parcours ainsi que du libre établissement sur terre comme sur eau, serait agir dans l'intérêt bien entendu du monde entier.'¹ Moynier also proposed that the observation of these principles should be guaranteed by means of an international treaty and he submitted to the Institute of International Law a draft to this effect consisting of ten articles.

On behalf of the same body, de Laveleye, a Belgian lawyer, published several studies on the question of the neutrality of the Congo and in 1883 recommended the setting up of an international commission on the Congo similar to the Danube commission. In the United States interest was expressed in the idea of starting a colony in the Congo which would be open to world commerce. The President himself, in his address to Congress, devoted an entire section of his speech to the question. At about the same time the New York Chamber of Commerce held a session on the 'free navigation' of the Congo. Similarly business circles in Germany asked for the establishment of some form of international neutrality in the region. Both the Rotterdam and Manchester Chambers of Commerce expressed the hope for an international solution to the Congo question. This was also the wish of missionary and charitable organizations such as the Anti-Slavery Society.

Surprisingly, most of those in favour of a special system of administration in the Congo entrusted its implementation to the International Congo Association. Leopold II, who for a long time had been trying to get reluctant Belgium interested in colonization, initially pretended, with great cunning, that his reasons for wanting to operate in Central Africa were purely scientific and humanitarian. To this end he had set up successively the International African Association, then the Study Committee of the Upper Congo and finally the International Congo Association. He even succeeded in getting the United States to acknowledge the association's gold-studded flag on 22

* Translated by Eamon Helly

¹ G. Moynier, *Annuaire de l'Institut de Droit Internationale*, vol. 7, 1883-5, Geneva, Paris, p. 250. Memoir

of 4 Sept. 1883 containing the draft treaty proposed by the author, summarized in sentence quoted p. 251.

April 1884 as 'the flag of a friendly state'. In return the association guaranteed 'exemption from customs duties and equality of treatment for all countries'.

A trend in public opinion could thus be seen in the years 1883-8 which was in favour of internationalizing the Congo, of making it neutral, and of establishing free trade and freedom of navigation for all countries throughout the Congo basin. The International Association seemed to many to offer the requisite guarantees for achieving this goal.

2. GERMANY'S FIRST STEPS IN 'WELTPOLITIK'

At this very time Germany was taking her first steps in *Weltpolitik*. On 26 June 1884 Bismarck announced to the Reichstag that the imperial government had resolved henceforth to support German private enterprise in overseas countries. With effect from 25 April 1884 a settlement on the bay of Angra Pequena, founded by Lüderitz, a German tradesman from Hamburg, would be given the status of a German colony. This marked an important change in Germany's foreign policy. Up to that time the Chancellor had been particularly occupied in establishing his supremacy in continental Europe and had been encouraging France in her colonial enterprises, in particular in Tunisia, in the hope that she might forget the loss of Alsace-Lorraine.

It would seem that in 1884 he was considering buying out Leopold II's entire involvement in the Congo. However, in view of the International Association's granting preferential rights to France and faced with the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty and English opposition to German ambitions in the Fiji Islands, he tried to come to an agreement with France over Angra Pequena.

The French ambassador to Berlin informed Jules Ferry that 'la Chancellerie portait un grand intérêt aux affaires de la côte occidentale d'Afrique et desirait marcher de concert avec nous dans ces parages'.² In fact at a time when the 1884 elections were about to take place Germany's participation in a territorial settlement in Africa met with popular support. It also solved the problem of finding new markets for her commerce at a time when Prince Bismarck had introduced import restrictions in Germany.

On 13 May 1884, returning to a proposition at which he had already hinted earlier, the Chancellor told the French ambassador: 'Nous nous entendrions volontiers avec les pays qui ont des intérêts analogues tels que les Pays-Bas, L'Espagne et aussi L'Italie. Nous croyons que la France est dans le même cas. Ce serait une sorte d'union des neutres . . . Une sorte de pacte de neutralité entre les nations adonnées au commerce d'outre-mer.'³ His main concern was the protection of German commerce and he proposed a coalition of the aforementioned countries against England.

France rejected the Chancellor's overtures but was prepared to agree to a conference on the Congo. Was it this side-stepping by France that made Bismarck send his son, Herbert, to England in June 1884 with an offer to support English claims in Egypt? This proposal did not have the desired effect . . .

² *Documents diplomatiques français 1871-1914*, 1st series (1871-1900), 16 vols., Paris 1929-59, vol. 5. These documents help retrace the Franco-German negotiations which led to the Berlin Conference from Apr. 1884 to Feb. 1885. A letter from Courcel to Jules Ferry on 22

Apr. 1884 marks Germany's new interest in Central Africa, *ibid.*, p. 253.

³ *Ibid.*, letter from Courcel to Jules Ferry on 14 May 1884 reporting a conversation with Bismarck on the subject of Africa, p. 290.

3. PRELIMINARIES TO THE BERLIN CONFERENCE

Finally the Chancellor sought France's agreement on the convocation of a conference in Berlin. On 16 August the French ambassador was asked: 'Was the French government prepared to agree with the German government on the principle of free trade in the unoccupied territory on the west coast of Africa?'⁴ Hatzfeldt, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, read a letter from Bismarck which said:

Il desirait depuis des années un rapprochement avec la France mais l'obstacle résidait dans des défiances mutuelles qui n'avaient pu être surmontées jusqu'ici, et le moment lui paraissait opportun pour s'assurer si décidément, ces défiances étaient insurmontables et s'il fallait régler sa politique en conséquence.

The French ambassador said that he considered it 'comme très désirable d'arriver à substituer, dans les rapports entre la France et l'Allemagne, la politique d'intérêts communs à la politique de sentiments et de ressentiments'.⁵ He made the point that it was important for France, however, not to come into conflict with England, which was in a position to create difficulties for France all over the world.

It was this desire for Franco-German *entente* that was behind the convening of the Conference. But in the background to all this there was a serious misunderstanding: Jules Ferry, though responding positively to the Chancellor's proposal, made it clear to the French ambassador that he did not want the proposed conference to become an engine of war against England.

As a result of this Courcel was invited to an interview with Bismarck at the latter's Varzin estate on 26-7 April 1884. Three items were adopted for the Conference agenda.

1. Ruling on the effectiveness of the new occupations on the west coast of Africa which would assume a similar status to the blockade declaration of effectiveness adopted in 1856. This was an essential point for Bismarck who wished to limit the extent of England's occupations on paper, a limitation the French also wished to extend to the occupations by the International Association.

2. The principle of freedom of navigation on the Congo and Niger rivers based on the system of administration adopted for the Danube.

3. The principle of commercial freedom in the territories of the Congo basin, the limits of which were to be decided and from which France would exclude Gabon in advance. Doubtless out of courtesy the Chancellor proposed that the Conference be held in Paris; the French representative insisted on Berlin.

Following this interview the Chancellor sent an official letter, which he had written himself in French, to the French ambassador on 13 September, in which he returned to these three agreed items for the agenda. He pointed out that if 'parmi les prises de possession effectuées dans ces parages par des commissaires allemands, certaines d'entre elles pourraient ne pas s'accorder avec les droits et la politique de la France, l'Allemagne n'avait pas l'intention de les maintenir . . . L'étendue des possessions

⁴ Ibid., translation into English of a passage from Courcel's telegram to Jules Ferry: conversation with Hatzfeldt. French text, 16 Aug. 1884, p. 371.

⁵ Ibid., telegram from Courcel to Jules Ferry referring

to a conversation with Hatzfeldt and the latter's reading of a letter from Bismarck: both parties advocate an end to mutual mistrust, 17 Aug. 1884, p. 374.

coloniales n'était pas l'objet de sa politique, laquelle ne visait qu'à assurer au commerce allemand l'accès de l'Afrique.⁶ The Chancellor proposed, if the French government would agree, to invite other governments with an interest in African trade to take part in a discussion at a subsequent conference. Bismarck himself went to the French embassy on 20 September to speed up the official French response: this he received on 29 September. France noted the assurances which Germany gave concerning her intention not to retain her colonial settlements should they conflict with French interests and policy in these regions. On the other hand, France gave her consent to free trade in the Congo basin on condition that the International Association would declare itself prepared to admit this free trade into all the territory over which it had control. The French government strictly excluded from these concessions its colonial settlements in Gabon, Guinea, and Senegal. It agreed to freedom of navigation on the Congo and Niger and that an agreement should be signed on the formalities to be observed in order for the new settlements on the African coast to be considered effective.

Jules Ferry was prepared to agree with the Chancellor's proposal to invite those governments concerned to a conference in order to discuss acceptable terms for mutual consent. The preliminaries for the conference were thus concluded. French refusal to oppose England, however, prevented a genuine Franco-German *rapprochement*. On 20 September Bismarck told the French ambassador: 'Il faut que l'Angleterre s'habitue à l'idée qu'une alliance franco-allemande n'est pas impossible . . . La coopération des marines secondaires groupées autour de la France pour résister à la prépondérance anglaise est dans les traditions de votre politique.'⁷ This proposal by the Germans was no more successful than the previous ones.

Did this reluctance on the French side lead Bismarck, who for several months had been engaged in negotiations with Leopold II, to sign a secret agreement with the king of the Belgians on 8 November? Germany recognized the association as a 'friendly state' and was granted equality of treatment and the status of most favoured nation. In particular she recognized the boundaries of the new state, according to an annexed map, 'sans garantir toutefois ces limites en raison de l'indétermination des intérêts tiers'.⁸ These boundaries included not only the territory of King Bateke with whom Brazza had signed a treaty but also all the French settlements along the Niari-Kwilu and, on the coast between Loango and Sette Cama, they divided the territory of Gabon in two.

Armed with this treaty, on 10 November the representatives of the International Association conveyed to Jules Ferry the claims contained in the rider to the secret treaty of 8 November: all boundary demarcations became impossible on these grounds.

Consequently France refused to allow the association to sit at the Berlin Conference and decided to carry on territorial negotiations outside the main agenda of the Conference. Agreement was reached on whom to invite to the Conference: fourteen

⁶ Ibid., Jules Ferry is given a letter from Bismarck to Courcel, 14 Sept. 1884, p. 404.

⁷ Ibid., letter from Courcel to Jules Ferry, reporting a conversation with Bismarck again advocating *rapprochement* against England. Our refusal to comply in this matter was to be the reason for the failure of a Franco-German *rapprochement* to be restricted to matters relating

to the Congo, 23 Sept. 1884, p. 424.

⁸ Pierre Daye, *Leopold II*, Paris 1934, gives interesting details on the Belgo-German negotiations whose goal was recognition of the Congo Free State, in particular Bismarck's letter to the king of the Belgians, 4 Sept. 1884, see p. 212.

countries would take part. The International Association—the most interested party—was not invited, most of the governments represented having refused to recognize its sovereignty. England and Portugal even raised objections to allowing Belgium to attend since the king's official representatives would also be the official representatives of the founder of the association. The Conference was fixed to open on 15 November 1884.

4. THE BERLIN CONFERENCE

The first item discussed by the Conference was free trade in Central Africa. At the beginning of the discussion a difference of opinion arose between those powers which insisted on having sovereignty over territories in the Congo and those which claimed commercial advantages in these territories. France and Germany, despite their agreement over the Conference preliminaries, found themselves to some extent in these opposing camps: Germany sought larger commercial markets but still wished to remain on good terms with France. The two countries decided to consult together in advance on the drafting of all projects submitted to the Conference.

A similar situation arose over the draft declaration on free trade. Informed in advance of its contents, the French envoy expressed two reservations: demarcation of the Congo basin still had to be fixed; the draft excluded the collection of all entry tariffs—this France considered too drastic. A new difference of opinion arose with Germany over the demarcation of French territories included in the Treaty Basin, when the text of the treaty which she had secretly signed with the International Association—and which seriously encroached on French rights in Gabon—became known to the French on 22 November. Germany declared herself prepared not to support the association's claim on condition that France accept the extension of the Congo basin to the Indian Ocean: France agreed to this. The Conference pledged to honour the existing rights of those governments with territories along the coast of the Indian Ocean, that is Portugal and the Sultanate of Zanzibar.

The Treaty Basin of the Congo was thus delimited on all sides: this included 'all territories drained by the Congo and its tributaries'. To this area (which in itself alone represented 3,600,000 square kilometres) were added two maritime zones. Within the Atlantic zone all agreed to include Portuguese territory between the River Lojé to the south and 5° 12' to the north. France confined herself to territory between Loango and Sette Cama on the coast and to her possessions in the interior in accordance with a territorial regulation which she was to elaborate with the International Association outside the agenda of the Conference.

On the Indian Ocean, the Treaty Basin extended along the coast from 5° latitude to the north as far as the mouth of the Zambezi. But Portugal would only consent to free trade for its future possessions in that region. In its existing colonies of Mozambique, from Cape Delgado to the mouth of the Zambezi, she consented only to facilitate the transit of international merchandise across the colony. As for the rest of this maritime zone, which was under the jurisdiction of the Sultan of Zanzibar (who was not represented at the Conference), the powers would only commit themselves to matters not involving the Sultanate. Once the limits of the Treaty Basin had been established

the Conference was left to decide on a system of administration for the area. In compliance with the Conference preliminaries, the draft declaration proposed economic equality and free trade. Taxes would not be levied except to pay for necessary expenses incurred for purposes of commerce. A difference of opinion arose between France and Germany regarding this matter. Germany was against all entry and transit tariffs. France agreed on the prohibition of transit tariffs since her concern was to promote trade in Central Africa; but she was of the opinion that an exit tariff alone or taxes levied to pay for services rendered would not be sufficient to compensate for the necessary commercial expenses.

Finally, in response to the wishes of the majority and after consulting with experts on African commercial affairs, a franchise on entry was decreed though the powers reserved the right to decide at the end of twenty years whether it would be maintained or not.

The Conference proceedings ended with the adoption of a 'Declaration relative to the Freedom of Commerce in the Basin of the Congo, its Mouth, and surrounding Countries'. What did this system of administration involve?

- (a) The principle of free access and equality of treatment for all was proclaimed. This was to be taken up in detail by the Congo Navigation Act.
- (b) Merchandise from all countries was to benefit from the entry and transit franchise and from equality of treatment.

The entry franchise was planned to apply for twenty years; the transit franchise and the other provisions relating to free trade were fixed for an indefinite period. These franchises and taxes were to be 'equally borne by natives and foreigners of all nationalities'.⁹

Equality of treatment was also guaranteed to all traders. This implied the exclusion of all privileges. Therefore there could be no 'monopolies or privileges of any kind in commercial matters'.¹⁰ Baron Lambermont's report specified: 'It [Article 5 of the Declaration] refers exclusively to traffic, to the unlimited power of every one to sell and to buy, to import and to export products and manufactured articles.'¹¹ Foreigners were to enjoy the same treatment and the same rights as nationals with regard to protection of their persons and their goods and in the exercise of their profession.

4.1 *Freedom of navigation*

Unlike the system of administration introduced in the Congo for commerce and which was almost without precedent in international law, regulations relating to international rivers had been in existence for a long time. Freedom of navigation had been proclaimed in Vienna in 1815 on navigable rivers 'which separated or flowed through several states'. These principles had later applied to the Paraná and Uruguay rivers in 1853; they even provided for the maintenance of freedom of navigation in time of war except where this related to arms and munitions. In 1856 the Congress of Paris proclaimed the international status of the Danube 'as henceforth forming part of

⁹ Article 3 of the Declaration, cf. R. J. Gavin, J. A. Betley (eds.), *The Scramble for Africa: Documents on the Berlin West African Conference and Related Subjects 1884-1885*, Ibadan 1973, pp. 166-8, here p. 167.

¹⁰ Article 5. *ibid.*

¹¹ Baron Lambermont's report, *ibid.*, pp. 168-73, here p. 171.

European public law' and entrusted the supervision of structural work requisite for navigation on the Danube to a European Commission which included members of non-riverine countries. At first sight freedom of navigation was much easier to implement in Africa than in Europe. The lack of organization between the local populations had left vast stretches of water free of all serious juridical restriction. In view of this situation disagreement arose once more at the Berlin Conference between those powers already possessing territory in Africa and those that were still without territory. The latter were ready to proclaim freedom of navigation on all African rivers, even those which crossed through only one state.

Bismarck, in particular, had expressed such a wish in his opening speech. There was strong opposition to the idea of such an extension and navigation acts were passed concerning the Congo and Niger only. England immediately pointed out the impracticality of setting up a commission on the Niger.

The principles adopted for these two rivers were in fact identical, if we except the provisions of the Berlin Act for the setting up of an International Commission on the Congo. Freedom of navigation and equality of treatment in the use of transit facilities on these rivers were proclaimed 'a part of international public law'. No distinction was to be made between subjects of river states and those of non-river states. 'No exclusive navigation privileges would be granted to either companies or individuals.' The provisions of these two navigation acts were to remain in force during time of war except where this involved the transportation of war contraband.

By reason of the special conditions pertaining to the African rivers which were interrupted by falls and rapids, an innovation was introduced: roads, railways, or lateral canals, created to substitute for the absence of navigability on these rivers, would be considered dependencies of these rivers and therefore open to international traffic. There would be complete equality exercised in the collection of tolls which would be calculated on the basis of construction expenses and administration costs.

An initial difference in the administrative system of each of these two rivers was the much more general implementation, in the case of the Niger, of the prohibition of any obstacle or tax based purely on the fact of navigation. The only taxes that were to be collected were those for services rendered. Conversely, on the Congo, taxes for services rendered were defined in, and limited to, three categories: harbour dues, piloting dues, and taxes to cover technical and administrative expenses, such as beaconing, incurred in the general interest. These taxes would be publicly listed in each port and could be revised every five years on the basis of international agreement. But the essential difference between the two systems lay in the guarantees of implementation. The river powers were responsible for the Niger: Britain for the lower river and France for the upper river. As in the case of the Danube, the Congo was to be administered by an International Commission consisting of river and non-river representatives.

During the Conference the same opposition arose regarding this question as in the case of the others; antagonistic feeling gradually developed between those in favour and those who were against internationalization in every field. Some powers—and initially this was the German position—would have liked to see the commission having a quasi-sovereign authority independent of territorial influence. In the end this idea was rejected except with regard to areas of the river where no power had sovereignty. This was purely provisional until such time as these vacant territories

became occupied. In such regions the commission was theoretically charged with deciding the works to be undertaken, appointing the agents, and collecting all taxes. The declaration of free trade even entrusted it with the supervision of the implementation of all the principles of the Berlin Act; free trade, religious freedom, protection of the local people and missionaries. The commission was to exercise absolute political control over these territories. In fact the powers conferred on the commission by the Berlin Act were extremely extensive, even over territories where territorial authority already existed. Its jurisdiction was supposed to extend over all the waters of the geographical basin of the Congo; it did not cover the other waters of the Treaty Basin except with the agreement of the powers whose territories this would affect. Its members, agents, offices, and archives would enjoy the privilege of inviolability during peacetime and neutrality during time of war.

Its statutory powers were of the greatest importance: it was to specify navigation regulations, river police, piloting, and quarantine regulations as well as to fix tariffs. These powers remained nevertheless subject to the approval of the Powers represented by the commission.

It had executive powers since it had to nominate all the navigation agents whose remuneration would be paid from taxes fixed and collected by the commission. It could in certain circumstances—especially in cases of acts of piracy, frequent in the Congo estuary, or in conflicts with the local population—have recourse to warships belonging to the signatory powers; the commanders of these warships could not intervene, however, except on the instructions of their governments. Subject to the approval of the river authorities, the public work to be carried out was to be designated by the commission.

In matters of finance the commission was authorized to raise loans on the security of its allocated revenue and decided on by a two-thirds majority vote. The governments represented, however, would not be bound by this vote except by special agreement to this effect.

Finally, it had powers of arbitration. Where problems arose over the application of the principle of the Berlin treaty, it could offer assistance to the governments concerned and be entrusted to examine the circumstances giving rise to these difficulties.

The Berlin Act, whether it was a matter of free trade or liberty of navigation, was inspired by an extremely liberal spirit, even if it did not go as far in this direction as some states would have wished. But its provisions, as we shall see, were not always effective. This was particularly so in the case of the International Commission which in theory marked a considerable development in international law in this respect. It was never convened.

4.2 *Effective occupation of vacant territories*

In international law the question of possession has, since ancient times, been based on the right of the strongest. To maintain priority of occupation over vacant territory one had to have the requisite material strength. At the time of the first great discoveries Spain and Portugal, who both individually claimed sole sovereignty of the seas, left the settlement of their dispute to the arbitration of the popes. But in the seventeenth century Grotius and his school, refusing to acknowledge the sovereignty of the seas,

had defined the doctrine of effective occupation as proof of colonial possession. This doctrine became the basis for numerous treaties whereby the principal countries mutually acknowledged one another's overseas territories, often following armed conflict.

During the course of the second half of the nineteenth century, with explorations and occupations becoming widespread in Africa, the new occupants had to face the excessive claims of certain countries. This happened in the case of Portugal who in 1884 asserted her rights to new territory on the coasts bordering the Congo, even though her occupancy there was purely fictional. This applied even more so to England who on paper claimed rights over all the enclaves situated between her settlements on the African coasts in order to interconnect these territories. The Berlin Conference, without claiming to define a new doctrine, adopted a 'Declaration relative to the essential Conditions to be observed in order that new Occupations on the Coasts of the African Continent may be held to be effective'.¹² Two essential conditions were prescribed.

1. The power taking possession of a territory on the coast of the African continent or setting up a protectorate there would henceforth have to send diplomatic notification of this to the other signatory powers of the Berlin Act.

2. The occupying power had to establish sufficient authority over its territories to ensure protection of its vested interests. England had established that these two conditions could only be enforced by occupation and that only the first condition, that is diplomatic notification, was necessary in order for a protectorate treaty to be valid.

The Conference dismissed the idea put forward by some that formal recognition by a third party should occur within a specified period of time; the absence of protest would constitute tacit recognition. In this the Berlin Act was endorsing a practice often admitted in the past.

The occupying power was supposed to be responsible for keeping the peace and administering justice. In the end it was accepted that such requirements could not be expected at the beginning of an occupation; they were included in order to ensure protection of vested interests. Germany wanted the vacant territories to be granted a general servitude status which would oblige the occupying power to allow free trade, or at least to prohibit all differential treatment. The Franco-German draft declaration submitted to the Conference rejected this idea and it was decided that such an obligation could be honoured only by special agreement such as the declaration of free trade in the Treaty Basin of the Congo. In order to avoid territorial conflict the Conference limited the application of these obligations solely to future occupations. On the other hand the declaration which it adopted applied only to the coast of Africa. England had asked for its application to cover Africa in its entirety but it was feared that its application to the interior of the continent—which up to this time was almost unexplored—would mean premature demarcation: the powers would be tempted to hoist flags wherever they wanted and there was a risk of further intensifying this scramble for new territories.

The question raised by the United States Minister, Kasson, was more delicate. He pointed out the following.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 299–300.

1. Modern international law favoured the right to self-determination of the local populations. He went on: 'In conformity with this principle, my Government would gladly adhere to a more extended rule, to be based on a principle which should aim at the voluntary consent of the natives whose country is taken possession of, in all cases where they had not provoked the aggression.'

2. He considered the conditions stipulated by the declaration as 'the minimum of the conditions which must necessarily be fulfilled in order that the recognition of an occupation may be demanded' and reserved for the powers the right 'to determine all the other conditions from the point of view of right as well as of fact . . .'¹³

This raised the whole problem of the legitimacy of taking possession *vis-à-vis* the local population as well as the question of acknowledgment of occupations in general. The Conference refused to issue a statement of principle, and by so doing to open the way to disputes between the occupying powers, on the extent of the sovereignty of native chiefs with whom the Europeans did business, or on the legitimacy of an occupation 'from the legal or factual point of view'.

A stance different from this could hardly be expected from the powers in 1885 but the very fact that the question should be raised assumes historic proportions.

Another aspect of international law was debated: a plan initiated by the Americans aimed at imposing neutrality on all the territories in the Treaty Basin. This plan pointed to the goal which the International Association claimed to be striving towards at that time: to turn Central Africa into a kind of international colony. Sanford and Stanley, members of the American delegation and unofficial representatives of the International Association, supported this proposal. This met with the approval of those powers that would be under no obligation by this: these were England, Germany, Italy, and Belgium—herself endowed with neutral status and unofficially representing the International Association.

For France and Portugal who had both agreed to include a part of their territories in the Treaty Basin of the Congo, this meant that these same territories would be subject to two distinct regimes during time of war; only the part included in the Treaty Basin would be neutral, though this would not be guaranteed by anybody.

In fact a serious political disagreement arose over this question between the French and German governments in December 1884. After France had settled her dispute with the International Association over territory in the lower Congo, she suggested an alternative solution which in part took up the American proposal. Three cases were provided for.

1. The powers with sovereignty over those territories included in the interior of the Treaty Basin could proclaim their neutrality from peacetime onwards and the powers would promise to observe this: this complied with the wish of the future Congo state.

2. In the event of a power possessing territory in this zone becoming involved in a war whose origin was unconnected with that region, the other signatory powers would try to persuade the belligerent parties to grant to these territories a status of neutrality.

3. In the event of a serious dispute over territory in the Treaty Basin, the contracting powers would agree to have recourse to the mediation of one or several friendly powers;

¹³ Kasson in the sitting of 31 Jan. 1885, *ibid.*, p. 240. This intervention, following the nomination of an American delegation to the Berlin Conference, marks

for the first time the involvement of the United States in colonial matters at an international conference.

they even had 'optional recourse to the procedure of arbitration in order to settle this dispute'.

These provisions were adopted and became the 'Declaration relative to the Neutrality of the Territories comprised in the Conventional Basin of the Congo'.¹⁴ They were undeniably an innovation in international colonial law.

4.3 *Humanitarian concerns*

The Conference met under the sign of civilization and progress in Africa. Besides, colonization had abandoned its old ways. The example of missionaries who for several centuries had exerted a civilizing influence, showed that peaceful penetration was possible. On the other hand, the system of colonial pact and slave trade had been replaced by an exploitation which continued up to the present almost exclusively for the benefit of the colonial powers but which was more in harmony with the principles of civilization.

The numerous explorations such as those by Brazza and Stanley, in which two or three Europeans, accompanied by a handful of Africans, crossed vast regions at a cost of heroic effort, were not comparable to the conquests of former centuries. They sought friendship from the local people and acquired new territories by means of treaties freely concluded with the local chiefs. The subsequent settlement of these areas was usually carried out without bloodshed.

The Berlin Conference was consequently dealing with colonialism in evolution. It had the merit of drawing up the first international treaty prescribing the responsibilities of the colonial powers towards the indigenous populations. The measures adopted were often confined to declarations of principle which were of limited practical significance. Nevertheless, they marked a change in mentality. An article was included in the 'Declaration on free trade in the Treaty Basin of the Congo' whereby the powers promised to see to the improvement of both the moral and living conditions of the local populations as well as to co-operate in the suppression of slavery and, in particular, the black slave trade. 'Especially the black slave trade', read the text, since it had a more odious character and because, before abolishing slavery, it was necessary to dry up its source of supply. That is why the Conference added to these general proposals a 'Special Declaration on the Slave Trade' whereby the powers whose sovereign territories formed part of the Treaty Basin of the Congo promised to put an end by all possible means to the use of their territories as a market and transit route in the trading of slaves. The treaties of Vienna of 1815 and later had in fact proscribed the slave trade but it was mainly the maritime slave trade they had envisaged and this had practically disappeared on the Atlantic coast.

In a similar vein the signatory powers pledged themselves to '... protect and assist, without distinction of nationality or of faith, all institutions and undertakings, religious, scientific, or charitable, created and organized with those objects, or tending to instruct the natives and to make them understand and appreciate the advantages of civilization'.¹⁵ The Christian missionaries, scholars, and explorers, their escorts,

¹⁴ Cf. General Act of the Berlin Conference, *ibid.*, p. 292.

¹⁵ Article 6 of the 'Declaration relative to Freedom of Trade ...', *ibid.*, pp. 166-7. In the General Act this article has been entitled: 'Provisions relative to

Protection of the Natives, of Missionaries and Travellers, as well as relative to Religious Liberty', *ibid.*, p. 291.

This and similar provisions mark the new spirit, however timid, with which the Berlin Act tackled the colonial question.

holdings, and collections would equally be protected. Bearing in mind the fact that evangelization had in the past sometimes served as a means of domination, the Berlin Act proclaimed religious freedom for the natives and for nationals and foreigners. Freedom to practise all cults and the right to erect religious edifices was recognized. For the first time local worship was taken into consideration—this did not prevent some being prohibited as too barbaric.

The decisions adopted with regard to traffic in alcohol were somewhat timid. Several powers feared that prohibition or tighter controls would be a constraint on free trade. Spirits were in fact used as currency in the Congo. The Conference permitted the river settlements along the Niger to regulate this traffic since the river flowed through Muslim territory. Elsewhere it was left to the sovereign powers 'to reconcile commercial interests with human rights'.

5. THE APPLICATION OF THE BERLIN ACT

5.1. *Effective occupation of territories*

To a certain extent the 1885 Berlin Act was somewhat utopian and in keeping with attitudes towards Central Africa prevailing at the time. Some wished to create a territory open to all where liberty and equality prevailed. This resulted in a breath of liberalism which contrasted with the usual protectionist regime in colonial territories whose aim was the profit of the parent state.

The Conference itself was not unaware of this liberal feeling, but it was not led by lawyers or humanitarians: it was responding to political initiative. The centre of the African continent still constituted a large white spot on the map. Governments, represented by diplomats, vied with one another in their efforts to gain possession of new and vast territories or to make the most of the chance to extend their commercial influence in this region without having to bear the cost of administering any country. During the Conference there was constant opposition to each debate between these two categories of powers.

However, contrary to the expectations of the envoys who had prepared a 'Declaration on essential conditions for a new occupation of territory on the African coast to be considered effective', with a view to preventing annexations on paper, this declaration encouraged various powers—even those such as Germany who initially aimed merely at commercial expansion in Central Africa—to place their flag wherever they managed to arrive the first. It was a free-for-all and resulted in the dismemberment of Central Africa. Numerous agreements were negotiated between various powers outside the main agenda of the Conference and also in the years which followed.

The chief beneficiary of this was the International Association which, many believed, would be the means of creating an international colony in the Congo. It was a triumph of personal diplomacy on Leopold II's part to have succeeded in gaining absolute control of the International Association's territories and in getting his flag acknowledged as 'the flag of a friendly state' by each Conference representative in a series of declarations annexed to the protocol. The new Congo Free State, whose

sovereignty extended across the main territory of the Treaty Basin, replaced the International Association on 19 July 1885.

5.2. *Free trade in the Treaty Basin of the Congo*

The implementation of arrangements to this effect was mainly the concern of the Congo Free State. The official representatives of the International Association at the Conference of Berlin had been in favour of a very liberal arrangement and during the initial years Leopold II tried to stick to the spirit of the Berlin Act. But the Congo Free State was in a disastrous financial situation. The tariff system in the Treaty Basin of the Congo was based on principles of equality and freedom; the latter was not to be restricted except by the collection of taxes based on services rendered and exit tariffs. The transit and entry franchise was absolute. In response to a request by Cardinal Lavignerie, Leopold II convened a conference in Brussels in November 1889 with a view to seeking a more effective means of applying the prohibition of slave trading as defined in Berlin. He referred to the costs incurred in 'suppressing the slave trade' in order that following a 'Declaration annexed to the Brussels Act', the entry tariff which had been prohibited in Berlin for twenty years would be authorized from 1890 to a maximum of 10 per cent. Since an entry tariff was already collected in the former possessions of the Sultan of Zanzibar, now part of English Oriental Africa and German East Africa, the rule of 10 per cent was extended to cover the whole of the Treaty Basin. In spite of this abuse of the entry franchise, it might be said that the tariff system remained within very reasonable limits.

But free trade was challenged less by these modifications than by the real estate system over which the Berlin Act imposed no restrictions. Tariff revenue was insufficient to cover administrative costs. The Congo Free State, which had proclaimed its exclusive right to take possession of vacant land with effect from 1885, decided at the same time that all acts were illegal whose intentions were to expel the natives from the territories they were occupying or to deprive them of their liberty or means of existence. Now in September 1891 an unpublished decree stated that, 'owing to the considerable costs incurred by the initial stages of settling in these regions', state property was to be kept for the disposal of the state, in particular ivory and rubber; 'traders who bought these products from the natives would be liable to charges of being in possession of stolen goods'.

This new change of direction by Leopold II ended in exaggeratedly favouring the large companies to whom concessions were widely granted at the time. The state and its concessionaries' allocation of exclusive rights over the produce of vacant land deprived the natives and the trading companies of all commercial rights. This did not apply to the concessionary companies in the vast territories which they were allocated. It should be pointed out however that possession of vacant territory by the state or its allocation to large companies was widespread in Central Africa at that time. The most vehement attacks, led originally by the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, then by the Congo Reform Association and philanthropic organizations, were directed against the Congo Free State and against the French Congo. But the abuses which were being denounced were also occurring in territories belonging to the other powers.

Was the system of large concessions a violation of the Berlin Act? Certainly it was contrary to the spirit of liberalism which had been manifest during the Berlin Conference. It should be acknowledged that, conversely, commercial freedom often led to the destruction of the country's natural resources on account of the 'raffle' or looting which resulted from this.

Private enterprise had not been attracted in the beginning by these tropical climates and forests to be cleared. Without big concessions, an inevitable source of intolerable abuses, the territory in the Treaty Basin of the Congo would undoubtedly not have seen such rapid development.

5.3. *Freedom of navigation on the Congo and Niger*

Of a surface area of about 4,500 kilometres, about 2,700 kilometres of the Congo is navigable. The Berlin Conference extended freedom of navigation to the Congo and all its tributaries, even to navigable sections flowing exclusively through the territory of a single state and equally to all the waterways included in the Treaty Basin. But the very beautiful juridical rhetoric which occupies eight of the thirty-eight articles of the Berlin Act, defining the very extensive powers of the International Commission of the Congo, was never implemented. The granting of freedom of navigation was from that time onwards entrusted to various river powers. In practice important river traffic first occurred in the maritime estuary of the Congo, but also in the middle Congo from Stanley Falls to Stanley Pool. From 1899 onwards international traffic was protected by forty-five steamers, twenty-two of which were Congolese, eleven Belgian, six Dutch, four English, and two French. Freedom of navigation was thus assured.

The franchise system adopted on the Niger was entrusted from the beginning to the resident river powers. Its stretch of 3,500 kilometres was divided into navigable sections interrupted by areas of rapids. France occupied the area of the upper Niger and England the lower Niger. The upper course of the Niger was relatively self-supporting since its natural outlets were up river. On the other hand on the lower Niger, which flowed within British territory, freedom of navigation was of international importance on account of the course of the Benue whose upper section joined territories claimed by Germany and by France. The chartered Niger company to whom England had conceded all the area of the lower Niger and the lower course of the Benue did its best to prevent French traders from reaching the upper Benue. It even acknowledged the river's German sovereignty in order to bar the route from the French. It might be said that until the Anglo-French agreements of 14 June 1898, freedom of navigation was more theoretical than real on the lower Niger and the Benue.

5.4. *The prohibition of the slave trade and the improvement in living conditions of the indigenous populations*

The Berlin Act added the prohibition of the slave trade on the African continent to the prohibition of the principle of the maritime slave trade included in the law of nations at the time of the Vienna treaties. But its implementation was left to the initiative of the sovereign powers and only applied to the Treaty Basin of the Congo.

Accounts by explorers and missionaries told of the permanent ravages caused by the slave trade: regions suddenly depopulated following a 'razzia' or rounding-up; a busy commerce in slaves flowed along routes strewn with corpses towards African countries where slavery was still rampant, towards Muslim Asia, and towards Turkey.

At the request of Cardinal Lavigerie and anti-slavery societies, a conference was convened by Leopold II in Brussels in 1889 and attended by, in addition to the signatories of the Berlin Act, the Congo Free State, Persia, and the Sultanate of Zanzibar. The Brussels Act of 2 July 1890 provided for the banning of slavery both on land and on sea from countries of origin to countries of destination. To complete its work of improving the plight of the local inhabitants, the Brussels Act decreed restrictive measures or a ban on the traffic of alcohol.

Although the signatory powers of the Berlin Act promised 'to see to an improvement in the moral and material conditions of the local populations' there were widespread excesses—as we have seen—from the system of large concessions in all the colonies of Central Africa. In particular the way in which taxes were collected gave rise to the most scandalous abuses. Often the concessionary companies were delegated to collect the taxes themselves. But whether it was levied by the administration or by the big companies this tax was paid in the form of forced labour such as portage or paddling or in local goods at low rates of exchange, such as rubber. Clearly it was a pretext for forced labour. This is what was denounced by the commissions of enquiry sent by the Congo Free State in 1904 and by the French government in 1905, as a result of campaigning against these abuses. Early reforms were introduced and in many countries public opinion decried these excesses.

CONCLUSION

Finally, the Berlin Act was inspired by generous sentiments. Yet many of its provisions, though often the result of compromise between those powers already possessing territory in the region and those who were merely interested in promoting commercial interests, were to prove effective. This applied to the creation of the International Congo Commission which never met or to honouring in time of war those territories proclaiming neutrality or to maintaining the freedom of navigation provided for by the Congo and Niger Acts.

Free trade did not work to a large extent because of the excessive influence of the real estate system. Freedom of navigation was left to the responsibility of the river powers who often abused their privilege of sovereignty in order to restrict or annul its application. Finally the declaration of conditions for a new occupation to be considered effective precipitated the dismemberment of Central Africa.

Only the measures applied to curb the slave trade on the African continent or to guarantee the safety of missionaries, scholars, and explorers and freedom of conscience or of cult, marked an undeniable progress in this limited field.

The Berlin Act, by seeking to extend the principles of international law to the colonies, blazed a trail which, however ineffectively at first, was to be the path along which future generations would follow.

Free Trade, Internationalization of the Congo Basin, and the Principle of Effective Occupation

IMANUEL GEISS

There is an irritating vagueness about the character of the Conference and its main results, reflected, in turn, in the difficulty in coming to grips with the matter. This vagueness begins with the very name of the Conference which took place in Berlin at the turn of 1884-5—'Congo Conference', 'Berlin West African Conference', as Sibyl E. Crowe calls it in her still authoritative monograph,¹ to quote only the more usual variations. The prevailing confusion would be further increased by referring to the official documents of the Conference Secretariat which are to be found in the archives of the host power, Germany.² Far from substantiating Crowe's plea for 'Berlin West African Conference' on the strength of alleged usage at the time, the prevailing official name, in the initial phase at least, was 'Conférence Africaine', in German 'Afrikanische Konferenz' (with variations in the spelling of *Afrikanisch* and *Konferenz* due to certain discrepancies within German spelling at that time). In future 'Berlin African Conference' might possibly become a viable alternative (in English and French, though not in German) to the many variations in use among historians.

The results of the Berlin Conference constitute another source of irritation: the discrepancy between its formal decisions on paper and historical reality; as Sibyl Crowe put it succinctly:

Free trade was to be established in the basin and mouths of the Congo and the Niger. Actually highly monopolistic systems of trade were set up in both these regions. The centre of Africa was to be internationalized. It became Belgian.³

Other decisions remained just as ineffective—neutralization of the Congo Free State in the event of war and, ironically enough, 'effective occupation'. Germany's violation of Belgian neutrality in August 1914 also ruled out the possible neutrality of the Belgian Congo. 'Effective occupation' had been limited to the coasts of West Africa, which by 1884-5 had already been largely occupied by colonial powers, and the principle was not intended to apply to the interior. Furthermore, there is the new anticolonial myth that the Berlin Conference actually partitioned Africa. Taken literally this seems to be a gross oversimplification of historical events that were actually far more complex. What John D. Hargreaves warned against in 1963 still holds true today:

The importance of the Berlin Conference has often been misrepresented and exaggerated . . . Nor is it true that the Conference 'partitioned Africa'. Territorial questions were specifically

¹ S. E. Crowe, *The Berlin West African Conference, 1884-1885*, London 1942 (reprint Westport, Conn. 1970).

² Deutsches Zentralarchiv (DZA) Potsdam. Reichskolonialamt (RKA), nos. 14108-14174.

³ Crowe, *Berlin West African Conference*, p. 3.

excluded from the agenda, and those requiring settlement were dealt with in a series of bilateral agreements extending over many years.⁴

Africa's colonial partition was not planned or executed in Berlin in 1884-5, but it was largely effected, though in a more complicated process, by decisions taken at the Conference. The historical evaluation of the Berlin Conference is, therefore, faced with a paradoxical situation: its formal decisions remained largely on paper; the historical facts (partition of Africa) ascribed to it can only be linked to it as (direct or indirect) effects, but hardly as the clear-cut intention that is suggested by loose wording. The powers as a whole did not *want* to carve up Africa into formalized colonies, but the Berlin Conference is, of course, more than a mere symbolic or allegorical footnote to the 'scramble for Africa'.

Finally, up until now the Berlin Conference has been mainly dealt with as an event of European diplomatic history, a part of imperialist expansion in the late nineteenth century. With the demise of colonial empire we now have the denunciation of both colonialism and the Berlin Conference, not only, as one might expect, in Africa itself, but also by the 'progressive' great-grandsons of the European imperialist generation of a century ago. But the ideological rejection of colonialism and a 'hundred years of' European 'intervention' in Africa does not really constitute a valid African perspective, let alone an historical alternative to the alleged systematic 'underdevelopment' of Africa by imperialist Europe. This essay tries to view the rather narrow subject in a wider historical perspective as a key event in the interaction of European and African history.

An analysis of the three basic principles of the Berlin Conference thus appears to become possible only after clearing (or attempting to clear) up some of the misunderstandings about the Conference itself. A more fruitful approach is obtained by viewing the Conference as a 'multilateral' or 'general commercial treaty' in its 'form',⁵ today one might add in its substance too. But it was one-sided, Africa being only the object of the contracting parties, but in no way a subject. The formula contains the key word 'commercial'. Indeed, the overriding concern of the powers assembled in Berlin a century ago was commerce rather than the establishment of regular colonies. But the Berlin Conference became a kind of watershed between the older form of European expansion overseas—free trade and 'informal' imperialism (without large-scale colonial possessions if it could possibly be helped, at least in Africa) on the one hand, and formalized colonies in a regular colonial state run by the governments of the colonial powers on the other.

In order to understand better what may be only a very fine distinction, we should, for a moment, delay the detailed analysis of the official proceedings.⁶ They make dull

⁴ J. D. Hargreaves, *Prelude to the Partition of West Africa*, London 1963, p. 337; also R. Louis, 'The Berlin Congo Conference', in P. Gifford and R. Louis (eds.), *France and Britain in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule*, New Haven 1971, pp. 167-220; even earlier J. Stengers, 'A propos l'Acte de Berlin ou comment naît une légende', in *Zaire*, 8 (1953), pp. 839-44. The anticolonial myth has been strengthened by K. Nkrumah, *Challenge of the Congo*, New York 1967, p. x: '... the original carving up of Africa [was] arranged at the Berlin Conference of 1884.'

⁵ H.-U. Wehler, *Bismarck und der Imperialismus*, Cologne 1969 *passim*, esp. p. 390; J. Grube, *Bismarcks Politik in Europa und Übersee: Seine 'Annäherung' an Frankreich im Urteil der Pariser Presse*, 1883-4, Bern, Frankfurt on Main 1975, p. 82.

⁶ *Protocoles et Acte Générale de la Conférence de Berlin 1884-5*, published, amongst others, in *Staatsarchiv* 1886; republished in book form recently with an introduction by Jean Suret-Canale, Bremen 1984. An English version is contained in R. J. Gavin and J. A. Betley (eds.), *The*

reading unless viewed, according to Goethe's beautiful poem about stained-glass windows, with historical insight gathered from *outside* the Conference proceedings. For this we have to distinguish more clearly between intention and effect and we also need a historical definition of 'colony'; our understanding of Africa's *colonial* partition is clearly governed by what we understand by 'colony'. This is another key concept. Our present understanding of 'colony' is largely coloured by the historical end-product of colonialism with which we grew up, the formalized colonial state which has now ceased to exist.

Since the early period of modern history at least two kinds of colonies relevant to our subject here had existed: the trading colonies of the Portuguese type and the European settlement colonies of the Spanish type⁷ (both, of course, with even older traditions). By and large the British Empire had combined the Portuguese and Spanish types of colony and added another variety: the conquest of a decaying Empire (India) leading to the reunification of a whole sub-continent by a colonial (imperial) power. Possibly because Britain had already to carry the burden of India itself she was loath to acquire additional formal *and* costly colonies in Africa.⁸ After the conquest of India by the British and of Indonesia by the Dutch by about 1860, the older (Portuguese) concept of 'informal empire' was largely restricted to Africa and China. China was too vast and sophisticated to be swallowed up by any one of the European imperialist powers, and besides, industrializing Japan was too close at hand. As a compromise the 'Open Door' solution emerged, even before its formal inauguration by the USA in 1899, and actually became Bismarck's model for Africa.⁹

Pushed on by the dynamism of increasing industrialization the industrialized nations collectively headed for economic penetration and domination of the last remaining continent, Africa; this normally goes hand in hand with some kind of political rule. The British as the colonial *beati possidentes* could afford to adopt a policy of 'wait and see', keeping their options on Africa open for as long as possible. As the exporting nation *par excellence* the British were all for free trade. Colonial newcomers and rivals, on the other hand, tended to seek more defined shares of both the commercial cake and African territory, thus creating customs and tariff zones in order to protect their commercial interests in Africa, and establishing their sovereignties, that is, their formalized colonies. France and Portugal, the older and weaker colonial power, were the main exponents of protected commerce and the colonial state model, both being far behind Britain in terms of industrialization. In the early 1880s Germany stood somewhere between Britain and France as far as industrial development was concerned. Although internally she had turned from free trade to protective tariffs in 1879, she was in favour of free trade in the colonial sphere, including Africa, because

Scramble for Africa: Documents on the Berlin West African Conference and Related Subjects 1884/1885, Ibadan 1973, pp. 129-301. The English version is used here, with occasional improvements in translation; also of German and French documents rendered in English in that volume.

⁷ D. K. Fieldhouse, *The Colonial Empires*, London 1965; J. H. Parry, *Trade and Dominion: The European Overseas Empires in the Eighteenth Century*, London 1971; also C. R. Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire*, London 1965; J. H. Parry, *The Spanish Seaborne Empire*, London

1966; C. R. Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415-1825*, London 1969.

⁸ R. Robinson and J. Gallagher with A. Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism*, 2nd edn., London 1981, for a detailed application to Africa of the more general thesis of 'Informal Empire' before regular colonialism; for British reluctance to go in for colonial expansion in West Africa and Britain's plight after the occupation of Egypt 1882 ('Gladstone's Bondage to Egypt'), see: *ibid.*, pp. 164 ff.

⁹ See below, p. 269.

by 1884 she had also become largely an exporting nation. The USA, which also took part in the Berlin Africa Conference, was not yet an imperialist power comparable to the main European participants. Her aloof position allowed her to take an even more detached view, because her more flexible political structure did not require direct political domination for the protection of her commercial interests. The Open Door Policy was *the* ideal solution for American commercial interests, a fact which formed the background to the lofty 'idealism' of the plea for African self-determination which seemed shockingly naïve or dangerously 'impractical' to the European delegates.¹⁰

The commercial interest was paramount to all kinds of European desires to 'penetrate' Africa economically. All the powers at least paid lip service to the principle of free trade, whatever they practised at home in their national economies. Applied to Africa their definition of free trade was, of course, in the European context and in the economic interests of the industrial nations. As with all traditional long-distance trade, that with Africa had never been based on free trade, but had consisted of an intricate web of local or regional monopolies, taxes, and privileges. In other words, free trade in European terms would have destroyed the traditional trading system within Africa, even though the Europeans were only interested in the African import and export trade and not in controlling regional or local domestic trade.¹¹

The overall push behind the 'scramble for Africa' came, therefore, from the general drive for new outlets of all the industrialized and industrializing powers of the day. For them Africa was not worth so much at that time, but it was seen as a valuable market of the future, although it still needed to be developed in order to accept the more sophisticated European industrial goods; this may be gathered from some of the official Conference documents.¹² Even Russia, which for geographical reasons only had marginal interests in Africa at that time, took this kind of interest in Africa's future. Her chief delegate, Count Kapnist, was informed by his Foreign Minister, Giers, that 'it is to be hoped that our own productivity will develop soon enough in such a manner that we also will be able to derive profit from these new markets and international exchanges and may, perhaps, one day assure ourselves of naval supply stations in times of peace or war.'¹³

¹⁰ Generally, see H. Brunschwig, *La Colonisation française*, Paris 1949; see also J. Lepsius, A. Mendelsohn-Bartholdy, F. Thimme (eds.), *Die große Politik der europäischen Kabinette, 1871-1914: Sammlung der Diplomatischen Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes*, 40 vols., Berlin 1922-7, vol. 4, no. 475, Count Herbert Bismarck to his father Prince Bismarck, 16 June 1884, about a conversation with the Liberal Foreign Secretary Lord Granville: '... wherever they [i.e. the French] colonise, the French introduce high protective tariffs, as high as 50 per cent, and do us infinite harm ...'. For French attempts at proceeding with the methods of 'Informal Empire', see J. Gallagher and R. Robinson, 'The Partition of Africa', in: *The New Cambridge Modern History*, 14 vols., Cambridge 1957-70, vol. 11, ed. by F. H. Hinsley, *Material and World-Wide Progress, 1870-1898*, Cambridge 1962, pp. 593-640. For the European reaction to American 'idealism' also see the Potsdam material.

¹¹ C. Newbury, 'Trade and Authority in West Africa from 1850', in L. H. Gann and P. Duignan (eds.),

Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960, 5 vols., Cambridge 1969-75, vol. 1: *The History and Politics of Colonialism, 1870-1914*, Cambridge 1969, pp. 66-99.

¹² See below, p. 273.

¹³ DZA Potsdam, RKA 4115. 'Die westafrikanische Frage, geheim', Giers to Kapnist, St. Petersburg, 3 Oct. 1884, secret instruction for the Conference: 'Bien que nous ne soyons pas directement engagés dans ces contrées, elles ouvrent un terrain si vaste et si nouveau au commerce international et aux compétitions politiques que nous ne pouvons pas nous en désintéresser. Quant au côté commercial de la question, il est à espérer que notre activité productive se développera avec le temps de manière à ce que nous puissions profiter aussi de ces nouveaux marchés ouverts aux échanges internationaux, et peut-être nous assurer un jour des points de ravitaillement maritimes pour les temps de paix comme pour le temps de guerre.' This is the only document of the whole volume in question, without any covering letter or note giving away how the Russian secret instruction got into official German files, whether by fair means or foul.

A century later the Soviet Union, successor state to Czarist Russia, has more than fulfilled Giers's vision regarding her position in Africa. Further secret instructions from Giers point to another factor in the immediate general historical background to the Berlin Conference: the link with the Eastern Question and overall Russian expansion.

From the political point of view, any movement that tends to channel the activities of the European nations with all their rivalries in that direction [that is, towards Africa] can only favour us by diverting their attention from our neighbourhood and from those areas which are of immediate interests to us.

These areas of 'immediate interest' were then, in alphabetical order, Afghanistan, Bulgaria, China, the Dardanelles, and Egypt.¹⁴

The historical link between the Eastern Question and the scramble for Africa cannot be overlooked, and not only because the Congress of Berlin in 1878 had taken place in the same capital, in the same building, and under the same president, Bismarck, as the African Conference of 1884-5. Russia's inexorable drive southwards against the Ottoman Empire had created the perennial Eastern Question since the Peace of Küthük-Kainardchie (1774) at the end of the third Russo-Turkish War. It had pushed the Ottoman Empire to the brink of disintegration in a series of Russo-Turkish wars, the eighth and final one having been concluded by the Congress and Peace Treaty of Berlin in 1878.¹⁵ Russia's pressure, spreading further southwards, sharpened a more general crisis of Islam than the Ottoman setback outside Vienna in 1683 which had led to the various *jihad* movements South of the Sahara since the eighteenth century. The African *jihads* culminated in the *Jihad* of Usman dan Fodio.¹⁶ This was part of the background of disintegration of the Yoruba-Oyo Empire which provoked perennial civil war in what is now Nigeria and had been subject to British missionary activity since 1840.¹⁷

The decline of the Ottoman Empire under pressure from Russia also brought Britain to the Suez Canal (1875), to Cyprus (1878) in the wake of the Eighth Russo-Turkish War and the Congress of Berlin, and to Egypt (1882), all for the sake of protecting her paramount imperial interest, India, but at the same time contributing, by sheer force of geographical circumstances, the onset of the scramble for Africa.¹⁸ The rather subtle and unobtrusive link between the theatres to be dealt with at the two international gatherings under Bismarck's chairmanship in Berlin could certainly be further corroborated by studying Russian archive material in the light of Giers's instructions to Berlin in 1884.

¹⁴ 'Quant au côté politique, le mouvement qui tend à porter dans cette direction l'activité des nations Européennes avec toutes leurs rivalités, ne peut que être favorable, en détournant ce courant de notre voisinage et des points où sont engagés nos intérêts immédiats.' Ibid.

¹⁵ Generally see M. S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923: A Study of International Relations*, London 1976, 6th edn.; for early Russian interest in Africa generally see E. T. Wilson, *Russia and Black Africa before World War II*, New York-London 1974, ch. 1, 'Russian Interest in Africa Prior to 1889', pp. 4-27.

¹⁶ W. N. Medlicott, *The Congress of Berlin and After: A Diplomatic History of the New Eastern Settlement, 1878-1880*,

London 1963, 2nd edn.; I. Geiss (ed.), *Der Berliner Kongress 1878: Protokolle und Materialien*, Boppard on Rhine 1979; R. Melville and H.-J. Schröder (eds.), *Der Berliner Kongress von 1878: Die Politik der Großmächte und die Probleme der Modernisierung in Südosteuropa in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Wiesbaden 1982.

¹⁷ M. Hiskett, *The Sword of Truth: The Life and Times of the Shehu Usman dan Fodio*, London-New York-Toronto 1973.

¹⁸ This is part of the general background to much of recent research done on the modern history of West Africa, especially Nigeria; for authoritative summaries see J. F. A. Ajayi and M. Crowder (eds.), *History of West Africa*, 2 vols., London 1971-4.

An analysis of Russia's policy at the time may lead to a better understanding of the main problems of the Berlin Conference. Within the context of the general drive for Africa, the energies for the scramble for Africa were generated by differences and tensions between the two main European concepts of putting overall commercial interests into practice: free trade and protective tariffs, leading to monopolies and the colonial state. Germany wavered between Britain and France, first siding with France against Britain in convening the Conference, whilst at the Conference itself working more in harmony with Britain in opposition to France. Free trade, as understood by Germany in the African context, was the governing principle during the otherwise bewildering course of diplomatic manoeuvring. This is well known from literature and published documents,¹⁹ but the latter yield some illuminating quotations to illustrate the main point to be made here: the paramountcy of the economic or commercial interest and, therefore, the reluctance to take on formalized colonies.

Britain, the leading colonial power, was very wary of moving into Black Africa. Even at the turn of 1882–3 the British government was only reluctantly prepared, as a last resort, to take control through a kind of protectorate of Little Popo. In the end the main motive was fear of a French protectorate which would exclude British trade. But even then London hoped to establish control 'without acquiring sovereignty',²⁰ that is, establishing a formal colony. For the same reason—fear of being shut out by the French wherever the latter might establish themselves—Britain concluded the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty in early 1884. This precipitated the Berlin Conference by recognizing older Portuguese claims to the mouth of the Congo river. The Portuguese reactivated older, more obscure claims from her first phase of empire, but now within the context of emerging modern colonial rule under the impact of industrialism, thus linking the older (Portuguese) concept of colonies to the modern one. Similarly, Britain preferred to give substance to the claims of King Leopold's even more dubious *Association Internationale* rather than risk massive French colonial rule at the mouth of the Congo river which would allow her arch-rival France to control the external trade of the whole Congo Basin. Although Leopold's Free State sailed under the misleading banner of free trade combating the Arab slave trade and creating a federation of African peoples under the mild presidency of King Leopold,²¹ his fraudulent moves once again bear witness to the primacy of the commercial interest which made it so easy for him to deceive the other powers. On the other hand, in June 1884 Britain's Liberal Foreign Secretary, Lord Granville, warned Bismarck of the illusion of getting away with merely giving 'immediate protection to your people provided by a Charter'. 'Eventually, you will arrive at colonies. Most of ours started in a similar way. Finally, you cannot escape them.'²²

Traditional confusion about Bismarck's colonial policy easily dissolves in the light of both the primacy of the commercial interest in 1884–5 and the definition of 'colony' which takes essential nuances into consideration. Bismarck was and remained against German *settlement* colonies ruled directly by the Reich and burdening the German taxpayer. However, for a host of reasons (domestic, foreign, economic, electioneering,

¹⁹ For a general survey see M. E. Chamberlain, *The Scramble for Africa*, London 1980, 5th edn.

²⁰ Hargreaves, *Prelude to Partition*, p. 325.

²¹ R. Slade, *King Leopold's Congo: Aspects of the*

Development of Race Relations in the Congo Independent State, London 1962 (reprint Westport, Conn. 1974), pp. 25, 38.

²² *Große Politik*, vol. 4, no. 745.

and so on) he was prepared to place German commercial interests under official 'protection', which at that time was the mildest of state involvement in colonial affairs. The way in which he clung to the British tradition of 'informal empire' for as long as possible is also reflected in his favoured method of *Schutzbriefe* and 'chartered companies' along British lines.²³ But, as Granville had predicted, the barest commitment of the German State quickly escalated into full-grown colonies. Germany, like other colonial powers, was drawn into the interior by the clash of commercial interests—African against European.

Some of the diplomatic confusion surrounding the Berlin Conference arose from misunderstandings or imprecise ideas about what was meant by free trade as it applied to Africa. The short-lived Franco-German colonial *entente* that gave birth to the Berlin Conference grew out of common resentment against British naval and 'colonial supremacy',²⁴ which to England's colonial rivals, old (France) and new (Germany), smacked of British 'exclusive' monopoly. Under the banner of free trade Bismarck thus banded together with protectionist France, led by Jules Ferry, on a course of colonial expansion against Britain, the epitome of the free trading nation, even though France advocated protective tariffs and tariff zones, at least in Africa. The starting point for Bismarck was the state of West African commerce, and the 'regulation of West African trade conditions along the lines of those in East Asia',²⁵ that is, in the sense of 'open door'. In the same context the principle of 'effective occupation' also made its appearance. From the outset it was formulated negatively, turned against Britain. France thought that she 'also had a claim to points which were, however, not yet occupied'.²⁶ The illustrative example used by the French ambassador to Berlin, Baron de Courcel, to persuade Germany in a later conversation was taken from the West African coast:

Sur la Côte d'Or des Anglais occupent deux points extrêmes entre lesquels ils n'admettent pas l'occupation par un tiers. La France a cependant occupé plus de vingt ans quelques points dans cet espace libre et l'Angleterre vient de nous rappeler par un acte sa manière de voir à ce sujet. A Paris on est sur le point de rejeter cette prétention d'Angleterre. La même chose peut arriver à l'Allemagne.²⁷

The principle of 'effective occupation' can also be put into wider historical perspective. From the beginning of Europe's expansion overseas, along with 'Freedom of the Seas', this (that is, effective occupation) had been the battle-cry of the emerging West European naval and colonial powers, especially Britain, which were challenging Portugal's and Spain's monopoly of conquests and colonial possessions,²⁸ as sanctioned by Pope Alexander VI Borgia (1493) and the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494). What Portugal and Spain had not been able to occupy administratively and fortify militarily in their respective global spheres was considered as being unoccupied, or at least as being at the disposal of any seafaring or colonial venture of other powers.

²³ Wehler, *Bismarck und der Imperialismus*, pp. 383 ff., also confirms that point of view.

²⁴ *Große Politik*, vol. 4, no. 680, Bismarck to Hatzfeldt, 7 Aug. 1884.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 681, Hatzfeldt to Bismarck, 11 Aug. 1884; also *ibid.*, no. 680.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 681.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 687, Hatzfeldt to Bismarck, 25 Aug. 1884.

²⁸ e.g. James I's England against Spain; see J. E. Flint, *Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria*, London 1960, p. 65 n. 1.

'Effective occupation' was respected in principle, but not so 'empty' claims to unoccupied territories or to the open seas.

In 1884, again, the doctrine of 'effective occupation' was the lever for aspiring rivals to attack the virtual colonial monopoly of *the* world power of the day. But the tables were turned on Britain, the most successful erstwhile challenger to the former Iberian world monopoly on colonial conquests. Now France and Germany were leading the drive to stake commercial claims in areas between distant British points of occupation (Gold Coast-Cape Colony), ignoring British claims to vast stretches of the West African coast which she had not yet effectively occupied. By claiming that there was 'no effective occupation' in the area Germany had just begun her 'colonial' career by proclaiming her 'protection' over part of future German South West Africa (Angra Pequena Bay) and along the coast of the Cameroons. Germany thus had the advantage over Britain which was slow to adapt herself to the wind of change in colonial affairs.

Thus, 'effective occupation' as a legal basis for internationally recognized colonial possessions, was in the late nineteenth century what it had been in early modern times: a calculated provocation to younger sea and colonial powers and a challenge to the traditional world power—that is, Spain/Portugal in former times and Britain in the late nineteenth century. Where the established colonial world power had not 'effectively occupied', others felt free to move in, if they could. In other words, free trade and 'effective occupation' were concrete applications of the overriding commercial interest, because occupation (effective or otherwise) was carried out in the interests of national export trade (or rather of export firms run by co-nationals) in the areas in question.

By the late nineteenth century, however, 'effective occupation' controlling Africa's external trade could no longer be restricted just to the narrow coastal strip. Again the commercial interest inexorably drew the occupying power into the African interior. As long as African merchants were able to supply the merchandise of the new 'legitimate trade' which gradually replaced slave trading (made illegal from 1807) in quantities sufficient for the growing demands of European industries and at prices acceptable to the Europeans, there was no need for physical occupation of the interior with all the hardships imposed by climate and geography. This is why European merchants on the coast and governments at home were against extending European rule into the interior. From about 1870 several factors conspired towards a dramatic change. The rapidly rising demand for African agrarian export products (groundnuts, palm oil, kernels, and so on) by expanding European industries, the demand for low prices, increasingly cut-throat competition between European merchants, who from 1873 were also under growing pressure from long-term economic depression, and, finally, the emergence of new would-be colonial powers (Germany, Belgium, Italy), prepared merchants and governments to break the stranglehold of African control between coast and hinterland in an effort to control the sources of African export trade and to dictate the prices most suitable to themselves. Such was the economic (commercial) rationale behind the changes of position that led to the scramble for Africa.²⁹

Other consequences flowed from this basic decision: trade usually prospers best in times of peace. In order to create suitable conditions for export trade, the Europeans

²⁹ A. G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa*, Imperialism', pp. 124-66; also C. Newbury, 'Trade and Authority'.
London 1980, 4th edn., ch. 4, 'The Economic Basis of

felt obliged to impose their peace on a traditionally fragmented and strife-ridden African society. *Pax colonica* became one prerequisite for rapid growth in African agrarian production for export to Europe, with the usual knock-on effect on the African economies and societies. One of the chief commodities of traditional African long-distance trade and one of the permanent sources of conflict was slaves; one central cause of internal wars was slave raiding. The Europeans put forward another argument which was much more powerful than the mere humanitarian aspect, namely the economic argument as seen from the primacy of their commercial interests—stamping out slave trading and slavery in Africa in order to establish the *Pax colonica* in the interests of trade. But this was only possible by military means and political domination, which inevitably led to the full-blown colonial state.

It is doubtful whether the statesmen and diplomats at the Berlin African Conference in 1884–5 wanted or even saw all the consequences of what they were doing, which have been outlined here in a rather summary and abstract manner with the benefit of historical hindsight. But they certainly wished for the most general of consequences: in one way or another building up and developing Africa as a potentially huge market for the future. Germany for one, not to mention Britain, was most reluctant to move into Africa in 1884 with the kind of colonial state which evolved after the Berlin Conference. In the preparatory stages of the Conference Count Hatzfeldt, acting on Bismarck's behalf in the *Auswärtiges Amt*, defined 'free trade' (*Handelsfreiheit*) succinctly as 'absolute liberty, because in those areas alone in which the agreement was to apply, no one would have the right to enjoy tariff sovereignty'.³⁰ Before the Berlin Conference Germany was also against establishing 'tariff sovereignty' (*Zollhoheit*). Instead, she wanted to see free trade for European merchants. Only after the Conference did 'effective occupation' become the instrument for sanctioning and formalizing colonial occupation even in the African hinterland. But during the period of Franco-German disenchantment at the Berlin Conference, Bismarck, in a polemic vein, clearly saw the consequences of French colonial policy at least. In a note in the margin of Hatzfeldt's report on a talk with Courcel, the Chancellor charged the French with pursuing 'le vaste empire colonial au centre de l'Afrique' as their overriding aim.³¹

Indeed, seen against the wider historical background and the general terms of reference outlined above, the actual proceedings of the Berlin Conference no longer made the dull reading one might expect. The Conference, as a product of commercial interest and of expanding industrializing nations, though chiefly projected into an uncertain future, now becomes a watershed between the older free trade informal imperialism and modern colonial rule in Africa within clearly defined colonial states. The summary of the well-known negotiations and their results³² can be brief here, but some of the points, which may appear to be merely technical, will be linked to more general historical problems based on key passages from the proceedings which, seen from the inside as it were, now shed new light both on objective facts and on the subjective view of the European powers in their attitudes towards Africa on the eve of colonial partition.

³⁰ *Große Politik*, vol. 4, no. 681.

³¹ DZA Potsdam, RKA 4169, 'Berichte an den Kaiser und Reichskanzler über den Gang und die Verhandlungen der Konferenz', Report Hatzfeldt to

Bismarck, 12 Dec. 1884 on conversation with French Ambassador Baron de Courcel (partly used by Wehler in his *Bismarck und der Imperialismus*, pp. 388 ff.).

³² Crowe, *Berlin West African Conference*.

Just as at the Congress of Berlin in 1878, Bismarck again dealt with the most complicated matter: the regulation of 'trading conditions' (*Verkehrsverhältnisse*)³³ in the Congo Basin. As a by-product, by way of compensatory equity, a different solution was found for the Niger Basin, in spite of all the apparent and formal parallels. All other allegedly principal subjects were in fact only of secondary importance. *Grosso modo*, the importance of subject matters is reflected by their urgency to the Conference, in the number of sessions devoted to each and the number of chapters and articles in the General Act of the Conference. Six and a half sessions out of eight (2-7, 9), including the inaugural and closing sessions which were of a more formal nature, were devoted to the Congo (plus Niger), and no less than four chapters (I-IV) with twenty-five (out of a total of thirty-five) articles (1-25) dealt with the Congo Basin alone; one chapter (V) with eight articles (26-33) dealt with the Niger. Just one chapter (VI) with only two articles (34, 35) dealt with 'effective occupation'. The formal aspect of the space allotted within the proceedings and articles of the General Act to the Congo and Niger respectively, at least suggests what the powers considered to be of prime importance. 'Effective occupation', therefore, might in future no longer be considered as the main concern of the Berlin Conference,³⁴ particularly as it was only a function of the overriding commercial interest.

The primacy of the commercial interest and the character of the Berlin General Act as a 'multilateral', 'general' (though one-sided) commercial 'treaty' can best be seen wherever conditions for trade and traffic in the basins of the Congo and Niger were dealt with. In his inaugural speech on 15 November 1884 Bismarck went straight to the heart of the matter. In the light of the primacy of the commercial interest and of modern historical scholarship, his outline of the working programme for the Conference now makes impressive reading:

In convening the Conference, the Imperial Government was guided by the conviction that all the Governments invited here share the wish to bring the natives of Africa within the pale of civilization by opening up the interior of that continent to commerce, by giving its inhabitants the means of instructing themselves, by encouraging missions and enterprises calculated to spread useful knowledge, and by preparing the way for the suppression of slavery, and especially of the overseas traffic in blacks, the gradual abolition of which was proclaimed by the Congress of Vienna in 1815 as the sacred duty of all the Powers. The interest taken by all civilized nations in the material development of Africa ensures their co-operation in the task of regulating commercial relations with that part of the world.

The plan followed for a number of years in the dealings of the Western Powers with the countries of Eastern Asia has up to now given the best results by restraining commercial rivalries within the bounds of legitimate competition. The Government of His Majesty the Emperor of Germany has therefore felt able to advise the Powers to apply to Africa, with modifications appropriate to that continent, the same plan, which is based on the equality of rights and uniformity of interests of all commercial nations.³⁵

Bismarck summed up his main concern: 'The fundamental idea of this programme is to facilitate the access of all the commercial nations to the interior of Africa.'

The most remarkable aspect of Bismarck's inaugural speech at the Berlin Conference is perhaps that the interests of the Africans, as formulated for them by the

³³ See above, n. 25.

³⁴ e.g. Grube, *Bismarcks Politik*, p. 82.

³⁵ *Protocols*, Protocol no. 1, in Gavin and Betley,

Scramble for Africa, p. 129; see also for the following quotation.

industrial powers of the day, were mentioned in first place. The report of the Courcel Commission, which was charged with examining the project of the 'Declaration Relating to the Freedom of Commerce in the Basin of the Congo and its Mouth', albeit in an intellectually less self-deceptive way, placed the interests of the Africans themselves only in third and last place. The report waxed almost lyrical over the prospects for the future:

Gentlemen, a vast market is open in the very heart of Africa. All nations will be treated there under conditions of perfect equality, and commerce will be subject neither to import duties nor vexatious formalities. Economic interests alone have not occupied your thoughts. At the same time, you have aided the cause of humanity, of civilization, of science and religious feeling.³⁶

When explaining why Europeans, represented by King Leopold's 'African Association', should assume sovereignty over the Congo Basin, the Courcel report expanded upon Bismarck's trio of reasons in the following way:

With respect to moral responsibility, it is in refusing to the numerous native populations the economic system most suitable for the development of commerce and civilization amongst them, that this would be chiefly incurred. The Powers are in the presence of three interests:

that of the commercial and industrial nations, which a common necessity compels them to search for new outlets;

that of the States and the Powers summoned to exercise over the regions of the Congo an authority which will have burdens commensurate with their rights;

and, lastly, that which some generous voices have already recommended to our solicitude—the interests of the native populations.

The system which will result from the deliberations of the Conference ought to be arranged in such a manner that, whilst rendering to the other interests the part which may appertain to them, it may tend more especially to stimulate amongst the population not yet fully developed a taste for labour, to facilitate the acquisition of the implements which are required by them and of the objects of primary necessity which they have not got; to hasten, in fact, their advancement towards a higher social state.³⁷

In the same context the report gave additional arguments in support of Article 6 ('protection of natives'), by distinguishing between 'three essential factors':

The first relates to the protection as well as to the material and moral development of the native populations. With regard to these populations which, for the most part, ought, undoubtedly, not to be considered as placed without the pale of international law, but which in the present state of affairs are scarcely of themselves able to defend their own interests, the Conference has been obliged to assume the role of unofficial guardian. The necessity of ensuring the preservation of the natives, the duty of assisting them to attain a more elevated political and social state, the obligation of instructing them and of initiating them in the advantages of civilisation, are unanimously recognized.³⁸

'Interests' (1) and (2), thus defined, need no further comment. 'Interest' (1), in its bald, business-like fashion, is formulated in a breathtaking Marxist-Leninist vein which could not be bettered in such brevity. 'Interest' (2) provides the basis for

³⁶ *Protocols*, Annexe to Protocol no. 5, Report of the Courcel Commission, in: Gavin and Betley, *Scramble for Africa*, p. 204.

³⁷ *Protocols*, Annexe to Protocol no. 4, Report of Commission, in: Gavin and Betley, *Scramble for Africa*, p. 170.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

customs and tariffs in the guise of meeting the cost of 'developing' Africa, as we would put it in modern jargon. The net result was the virtually monopolist system of the Congo Free State, as the private, closed trading state and exploitative colony of Leopold II, with all the cruelties that were then still in store for the Africans.³⁹

But 'interest' (3) demands more detailed comment in the light of historical developments during the last century. Its formulation betrays the subjective image that the industrial powers had of themselves and of their role *vis-à-vis* Africa which cannot pass unnoticed. They were the self-appointed collective 'official guardians' of the Africans, yet they acted in the economic interests of the industrial countries. Cynical as it may sound today, there was even a shred of objective reality in this preposterous claim. On the one hand, their role as 'collective official guardians' amounted to what Kipling later called the 'White Man's Burden' and Lugard the 'Dual Mandate'; on the other hand, at that time the Africans did not have recognized leaders or representative spokesmen to defend or even merely to define Africa's continental interests before the council of the industrial powers. In this vacuum the European powers arrogated to themselves the right to stipulate for Africa as a whole Africa's 'true' interest—taking part in industrial 'progress' by being linked in a more direct and systematic way to the expanding system of the world economy and the world market. The historical function of the European powers as collective 'official guardians' of Africa amounted, therefore, to what has been called in the twentieth century, an *Erziehungsdiktatur*, exercised by authoritarian or totalitarian regimes of the 'right' or 'left', in particular between the two World Wars.

The three 'interests' formulated by Bismarck and the Courcel Commission thus meant nothing other than the opening up of Africa to industrialization, naturally to the advantage of the 'trading and industrial nations which are compelled, by common necessity, to find markets as outlets for their products', and thus linking Africa to the expanding industrial world economy. The vast market in the interior of Africa, however, was only a vague hope for the future. The Europeans had to create the future market themselves, but first the Africans would have to become able to absorb industrial goods from Europe—first consumer goods and later capital goods. By concentrating on the basins of the two largest river systems of sub-Saharan Africa, the Congo and the Niger, the European powers, in effect, succeeded in opening up the two most strategic areas to the imposition of their economic and political influence on Africa.

No matter how ignorant the Europeans were about conditions in Africa at that time, the Courcel Commission was remarkably realistic on three central points, as modern scholarship has proved: Africa's extreme social and political fragmentation; the multitude of virtually permanent internal conflicts that eased the imposition of *Pax colonica* and for some even made it plausible and desirable; and the enormous importance of African domestic slavery,⁴⁰ which made it an additional source of conflicts, beyond the normal motives (struggles over land, water trade routes, political power).

³⁹ Slade, *Leopold's Congo*, pp. 175–92.

⁴⁰ S. Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, London 1975, pp. 118–66; S. Miers and I. Kopytoff (eds.), *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological*

Perspectives, Madison 1977. For the social and political fragmentation in pre-colonial Africa also E. Colson, 'African Society at the Time of the Scramble', in Gann and Duignan, *Colonialism in Africa*, vol. 1, pp. 27–65.

Africa's extreme fragmentation leads to the question why Africans were not present in Berlin in 1884-5, a fact to which the British Chief delegate, Sir Edward Malet, drew the attention of the Conference in the inaugural session.⁴¹ There was no consciousness of Africa as a whole amongst the Africans of the time, no one who could have spoken as an accepted representative of an overall African general interest. Instead, there was a host of local and regional factors, each with clashing interests, yet all claiming sovereignty. The notorious treaties of European agents with their mostly dubious legal basis for colonial occupation and rule did at least reflect the high degree of fragmentation of African sovereignties; others, such as the Sultanates of Sokoto or Zanzibar, were quasi-feudal power structures, based on the military conquest, political rule, and social exploitation of subjugated peoples with arbitrary forms of taxation, which often took the form of plunder and slaving raids. Those rather isolated individuals who did have visions of Africa as a whole were intellectuals (such as Edward Blyden) educated in Euro-American thinking. Alienated from indigenous culture in mission schools and sometimes partly of European descent, these men were hardly representative of Africa.⁴² In any case, as a viable political factor Africa was, in 1884, nothing more than a vague possibility in an uncertain future.

What the Courcel Commission wrote on the effect of African domestic slavery was also substantially true:

Two sources weigh down the present condition of the African races and paralyze their development: slavery and the slave trade. Every one knows, and the evidence of Mr Stanley has only confirmed, as regards this question, an obtained opinion, what deep root slavery has taken in the constitution of African bodies. Assuredly this pernicious institution must disappear; it is an essential condition of any economic and political progress; but tact and gradual transitions will be indispensable.⁴³

This remarkable passage illustrates the intimate links between commercial interests, free trade, African slavery, 'effective occupation', and the expansion of formalized colonial rule after the Berlin Conference. The disappearance of African slavery, after less than a century, is apparently taken so much for granted now that contemporaries today, both inside and outside Africa, seem to have difficulty in appreciating to what extent the suppression of slavery by colonial rule has revolutionized modern African society, or to what a considerable degree domestic slavery had been an integral part of traditional African society. Even though African domestic slavery cannot be equated with slavery in the Americas, the Berlin Conference was essentially right in one respect: the eventual suppression of slavery in Africa did remove one major obstacle to the development of modern industrialization, which those speaking up for Africa, in the past as in the present, always demanded.⁴⁴ Judging from historical experience it is inconceivable that the Africans would have been willing and able to abolish their considerable vested interest in domestic slavery and slave trading of their own accord, had it not been for harsh intervention from outside in the form of colonial rule,

⁴¹ *Protocols*, Protocol no. 1, in Gavin and Betley, *Scramble for Africa*, p. 131: 'I cannot forget that the natives are not represented amongst us, and that the decisions of the Conference will, nevertheless, have an extreme importance for them.'

⁴² I. Geiss, 'Das Entstehen der modernen Eliten in

Afrika seit der Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts', in *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, 11 (1971), pp. 648-67.

⁴³ *Protocols*, Annexe to Protocol no. 4, in: Gavin and Betley, *Scramble for Africa*, p. 172.

⁴⁴ See I. Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement*, London 1974, pp. 96-131.

regardless of how selfish or great the commercial and political interests of the European powers may have been. The abolition of African slavery in Africa had an effect comparable only to the disappearance of serfdom in Europe as one of the preconditions for the emergence of industrialism. Moreover, historically, European intervention in Africa did the same for that continent as Napoleon I had done for Germany, that is, it reduced the virtually infinite and unmanageable number of indigenous sovereignties (10,000 at a rough guess) to about 50 after decolonization.

After this more general discussion of the principles involved in the Berlin Conference, its results as laid down in the General Act can be better understood. The first 'basis' was formalized into the establishment of the 'Conventional Congo Basin'. This was a large free trade zone, extending far beyond the frontiers of the Congo Free State, the present Zaire, and in the east, even beyond the geographical Congo Basin. Here British and German interests in free trade prevailed over French and Portuguese obstructiveness. The 'Conventional Congo Basin' reached from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean. Its core was the Congo Free State, but it also included the French Congo (Brazzaville), parts of French Equatorial Africa (Ubangi-Shari: today the Central African Republic), Southern Sudan, Ethiopia, Zanzibar, and Northern Mozambique. Certain complications arose when news was received that the sultan of Zanzibar was claiming sovereignty as far as Lake Tanganyika, because suddenly an African sovereignty had appeared, however vaguely defined, which at a pinch could have passed as being an independent and sovereign state.⁴⁵ 'Native chiefs' were to be bound by the principle of free trade,⁴⁶ but probably only as far as Africa's export trade was concerned. As a compromise between free trade and protective tariffs France succeeded in establishing 'dues' as 'just compensation for meeting expenditure incurred in the interests of trade' (Article 3). France further restricted the principle of free trade (ban on 'entrance and transit customs', Article 4) by stipulating that a final decision about whether to retain free trade or not, would be taken after twenty years or so (Article 4). Such 'dues' became the back door for creating the king of 'tariff sovereignty' which had been rejected at least by Germany and Britain before the Conference opened. In any case, international recognition of the 'African Association' as a new sovereign state opened up the way for the 'closed commercial state' (*geschlossener Handelsstaat*, thus Friedrich List) and the ruthlessly exploitative colonial state. However, stipulations providing security for trade and modern means of communication (roads, canals, railways) in order to negotiate the natural obstacles of the Congo rapids (Article 16), which should have been similar to rules for the Danube Commission, remained vague and evasive, because Russia refused to accept the International Danube Commission and the internationalization of the Danube as a precedent to be applied to Africa generally.⁴⁷

It was during discussions on the principles of free trade and internationalization of the Congo Basin that the subtle transition from classical free trade informal empire along British lines to the fully fledged colonial state can be pinned down for the first time—France establishing 'tariff sovereignty' in the guise of modest levies to cover the cost of services in the interests of trade; Bismarck's non-public outburst against the French dream of 'le vaste empire colonial au centre de l'Afrique';⁴⁸ finally in the

⁴⁵ *Protocols*, Protocol no. 3, in: Gavin and Betley, *Scramble for Africa*, p. 142 f; also Report of Commission, Annex to Protocol no. 3, in *ibid.*, p. 155.

⁴⁶ *Protocols*, Protocol no. 5, in *ibid.*, p. 175.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 177–9.

⁴⁸ See above, n. 31.

arguments used by France and Portugal to combat the 'Utopian' suggestion made by the United States to neutralize the Congo Free State and the whole of the conventional Congo Basin in the event of war.⁴⁹ France and Portugal, the radical champions of colonial protectionism, based their opposition to neutralization on the infringement of their sovereign rights over present and future colonial possessions in Africa. Articles 10 and 11, therefore, already reflect the change from informal empire, under the primacy of the commercial interest, to the future colonial state: Article 10 opens with a bow to the original principle of the commercial interest: 'In order to give a new guarantee of security to trade and industry, and to encourage, by the maintenance of peace, the development of civilisation in the countries mentioned in Article 1, and placed under the free trade system . . .'. But its end and the beginning of Article 11 already introduce the principle of sovereignty by referring to 'Powers which exercise their rights of sovereignty or protectorate', that is, the future colonial state. Again, however, this stipulation remained vague and non-committal. It proved ineffective during the First World War. Although the Berlin General Act devoted many detailed articles to the 'Congo Navigation Act' (Articles 13–25), the International Commission of the Congo had only a few rights.

The Niger Navigation Act (Articles 26–33) opened with stipulations similar in form to those of the Congo Navigation Act. But in reality the situation differed greatly on each river system. Just in time for the Berlin Conference Sir George Goldie had succeeded in buying out his most obstinate and dangerous rivals on the Niger: French commercial companies.⁵⁰ The British could now claim that the international regimes for both river systems would have to recognize the difference between the Niger and the Congo—Upper and Central Niger controlled by France, Lower Niger and the Delta controlled by Britain. Thus England ruled out any international control over the Niger Basin. Instead of concrete obligations under international law there were only vague, voluntary undertakings on the part of France and Britain not to discriminate against merchants from other nations (Article 30). Here again, we have a hint of the future colonial state ('sovereignty or protectorate') when on the face of it only the commercial interest was to be given substance in international law.

The third basis, 'effective occupation', fits perfectly into the pattern established by the preceding historical analysis. Germany, the most powerful of the new colonial powers, pressed most energetically towards clear definitions. Britain, the most powerful of the colonial *beati possidentes*, offered strongest resistance to the claims of the colonial have-nots. France stood somewhere between Germany and Britain, as behove her position as an established, but second-rate colonial power; she was England's traditional rival overseas, but at that time stood in uneasy and wavering *entente* with Germany, her new rival on the European continent as far as colonial matters were concerned.⁵¹ Britain was in the stronger position, though, and therefore carried the point: 'effective occupation' was to be limited to the coastal areas of West Africa. The

⁴⁹ Report Hatzfeldt to Bismarck, 16 Dec. 1884, on discussions in the Commission, on the American proposal: 'Dem zweiten Antrag widersprachen nur die Vertreter Portugals und Frankreichs und zwar Letztere mit großer Entschiedenheit. Herr Serpa bezeichnete ihn als einen Eingriff in die Souveränitätsrechte der Colonial-Staaten. Baron Courcel suchte den Antrag als eine

Utopie zu schildern, wodurch er einen Protest des Mr. Kasson hervorrief.' DZA Potsdam, RKA 4169. Also *Protocols*, Protocol no. 5, Report of Commission in: Gavin and Betley, *Scramble for Africa*, pp. 200 ff.

⁵⁰ Flint, *Sir George Goldie*, the chapter 'Berlin and the Charter', pp. 62–87, especially pp. 67 ff.

⁵¹ Crowe, *Berlin West African Conference*, pp. 176–91.

circle of powers who would have to notify colonial occupations was also extended to *future* colonial powers. The more precise term 'jurisdiction' in the original Franco-German draft was replaced by the vaguer 'authority' and a distinction was made between 'occupation', apparently for the establishment of European sovereignty, and protectorate. A Belgian amendment, obviously made in agreement with the British delegation, succeeded in eliminating the Franco-German formula 'to keep the peace' even at the Commission stage, whilst a Portuguese amendment, again at the Commission stage, to include the passage 'in order to make effective the abolition of slavery', was defeated in plenary session.⁵² Britain wanted to water down the challenge of 'effective occupation' to her informal and therefore undefined and illimited claim for commercial empire. To achieve this she even subordinated two other cherished principles to her paramount commercial interest: the abolition of slavery and keeping the peace, probably because she saw the consequence of both to be formal colonial empire.

The importance of the relationship between African domestic slavery and the Atlantic slave trade carried on by Whites—Brazil was not to abolish slavery until 1888—was the reason given by the Portuguese delegate for his move. 'His intention was not to strike at the domestic slavery of the negroes, which might necessitate a change in the social organization of the natives which would not perhaps be the work of a day, but rather to prohibit the purchase and employment of slaves by the white population.'⁵³ The link between 'effective occupation' and domestic African slavery is at least worthy of mention here.

After cutting so much from the original Franco-German proposition, Article 35 once more paid tribute to the primacy of the commercial interest—future 'authorities' should be 'sufficient to protect existing rights and . . . freedom of trade and transit'.⁵⁴

It was whilst discussing 'effective occupation' that the transition from informal commercial empire to formal colonial empire became apparent at the Berlin Conference for a third time. Sir Edward Malet had hinted at extending 'effective occupation' to the interior of Africa, 'since the African coasts are very near to being occupied to their full extent, and, if restricted to this zone, the formalities we have in view will have but little practical value'.⁵⁵ Such an idea ran counter to Britain's imperial interests which usually deplored any kind of limitation by the principle of 'effective occupation'.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, when discussing the British suggestion, the commission had a momentary glimpse of the future that was in store for Africa:

The French Ambassador did not share this feeling. Granted that there existed but little available territory on the coast, these territories made amends by possessing an importance which justifies new arrangements of which they would be the object. Along the seashore, moreover, the ground is clearly defined, whilst, in regard to territorial delimitations, there is much that is uncertain and unknown in the interior of Africa. Klemens A. Busch, Under-Secretary of State, had not, for his part, declared himself hostile in principle to Sir Edward Malet's proposal; but he remarked that it necessarily implied the precise and early settlement of the state of possession of each Power in Africa.

⁵² *Protocols*, Protocol no. 7, in: Gavin and Betley, *Scramble for Africa*, p. 250.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ By 'existing rights' were to be understood rights under private law, i.e. commercial rights.

⁵⁵ *Protocols*, Annexe to Protocol no. 5, Report of Commission, in Gavin and Betley, *Scramble for Africa*, p. 246; see also the long quotation about the ensuing debate in the Commission, text at n. 57, below.

⁵⁶ Crowe, *Berlin West African Conference*, p. 181.

The United States' Minister having remarked that such a delimitation would present important advantages, and would tend to the prevention of future disputes, the objection was raised that an opposite result was to be apprehended. A precise definition of present possessions would lead in fact to a partition of Africa.⁵⁷

This may have been the only time that 'the partition of Africa', which may have been in everyone's mind at the Berlin Conference, was actually referred to, and then only in a commission meeting. But from the dry record of the proceedings one can feel the awkward silence that must have followed Busch's remark. Yet the logic behind it was clear—'effective occupation' along the *coast* would lead to 'effective occupation' of the *hinterland*, and that would lead to a 'partition of Africa' between the colonial powers. But, and here is the rub, the European powers, for the last time, shrank away from the idea of having to carve up Africa amongst themselves, outwardly at least because there was no opposition to the plea against partitioning Africa. If the delegates of any of the powers secretly thought otherwise, they kept their ideas or intentions to themselves. Even if everyone remained silent, tongue in cheek, no one in Berlin cared or dared to challenge the otherwise unspoken consensus—no partitioning of Africa as an *intention*. But the dynamics of the commercial interest and the logic of mechanisms, once set in motion under the impact of industrialization and the competition between colonial/commercial powers, brushed aside all hesitation on that score. The theoretical rejection of the principle of partitioning Africa in Berlin remained rather meaningless, for it came at a time when the European powers were actually girding themselves for the scramble for Africa, which was to take place in the coming decade whether or not they were aware of it in Berlin in December 1884.

Thus the paradox outlined above should find a solution and it should also become possible to arrive at a less emotional judgement on the Berlin Conference than usual. Following the arguments of John D. Hargreaves, we may discard the modern myth of the Conferences' having actually divided up Africa, as has been suggested by some lax formulations. But it did pave the way for Africa's partitioning, its momentary academic abhorrence of that very principle notwithstanding, or its illusion of being able to avoid partitioning by restricting 'effective occupation' to the West African coast, where hardly anything was left for colonial partitioning at the time of the Conference. The Berlin Conference, therefore, did not intend the partitioning of Africa, but it certainly was a major factor in causing it at the end of a long and complex chain of developments. This distinction may appear too fine to some, but the difference between intention and causation is sometimes of great importance in history as in everyday life.

Finally, one may be permitted to take an even broader view of the two central aspects of this paper—free trade for the Congo basin and 'effective occupation' at the Berlin Conference—as an important confluence in European and African history. European expansion overseas to Africa in the nineteenth century in the form of political rule and colonialism effected Africa's introduction into global industrialization, seen here without moralizing one way or the other. In that respect the 'developing' strategy of the Conference, as Bismarck had outlined in his opening speech, did work—increasing Africa's export trade by modernization, as we would put

⁵⁷ See above, n. 55.

it today. But it proved impossible simply to extend *ad infinitum* the older structures of 'informal empire' to the hinterland, as Britain and Germany, at least, would have preferred. The French idea of the sovereign colonial state under European rule, albeit in the interests of metropolitan external trade, carried the day—for a while. The European colonial state provided the basis and general framework for industrialization and modernization in Africa, no matter how uneven and patchy it was in practice.

For the historian it does not matter much whether, *sub aeternitatis specie*, we rejoice ideologically in the results of history or not. In the face of the global crisis of industrialism and the terrible state of affairs Africa is presently in (disappearance of forests, massive erosion of all kinds, the rapid advance of the desert, drought and starvation, population explosion, civil wars, massacres, and the plight of millions of refugees) we have in any case dampened our Promethian or Faustian exuberance for modernization. It remains a doubly moot point whether 'Africa's budding civilization' (Bismarck, 1884) would have been possible by means other than European rule. Yet there is no denying that industrialization and modernization, which no one would or could undo, have come to Africa via colonial rule and that the Berlin Conference was the last crucial stage before their descent upon Africa. The two economic giants of post-colonial, independent Africa south of the Sahara, Nigeria and Zaire, each demonstrate in their own way the historical link between colonial rule and modernization: both African countries have thrown themselves most systematically and vigorously into the effort of massive industrialization. And it is certainly no historical coincidence that they both lie in the very regions that were the object of special attention at the Conference—the greatest river systems of West and Central Africa, the Niger and the Congo.

It is at this point that the defenders of European colonial rule and their strongest, post-colonial critics, the anti-imperialists, meet ideologically: the inevitability, even the desirability of Africa's development by industrialization lies after all at the bottom of the anti-imperialist accusation that imperialism degraded Africa into becoming the 'periphery' of Europe throughout the centuries (Immanuel Wallerstein) or, even more bitterly, that it 'underdeveloped' Africa (Walter Rodney). Both kinds of critics blame capitalism and imperialism for having suppressed or postponed Africa's industrial development by submitting her to political conditions (colonial rule) hostile to her even more rapid industrial development. Yet, through the logic of contrafactual speculation in history, they will never be able to prove that their fictional alternative would have been more efficient or beneficial to Africa as a whole than the one that did prevail: colonial rule, ushered in by the principle of free trade and 'effective occupation' at the Berlin Conference in 1884–5.

Aspects of American Interest in the Berlin Conference

GEORGE SHEPPERSON

In the drafting of the Berlin Act, as in the formation of the Congo State, no small part was played by the United States, though the ratification of that country was refused to the Act as finally passed.

(Arthur Berriedale Keith)¹

Into these few words, the polymathic Scottish Professor Arthur Berriedale Keith, after thirteen years in the British Colonial Office, could compress the little that was known in the world of historical scholarship in the second decade of the twentieth century about American involvement in the emergence of the West African Conference of Berlin and in its consequences for Africa, Europe, and the United States. Indeed, as late as the fifth decade of the twentieth century it could be noted that, although the United States did not ratify the General Act of the Berlin Conference in 1885, they had been represented at the Conference by John A. Kasson, American Minister to Germany and his associated delegate, Henry S. Sanford, formerly American Minister to Belgium and active sympathizer with Leopold II in his African schemes, and Kasson's technical delegate,² the internationally famous explorer, Henry Morton Stanley with his twenty-three years of American contacts.³ But, as it was stated in 1952, although through 'the words and actions of these three men at Berlin, there can be little doubt of American influence on the Conference, yet there is hardly anything written about America's part in this great diplomatic event; and of the economic implications of her actions there are no major studies.'⁴

Happily, in the centenary years of the West African Conference of Berlin, such a negative generalization cannot be made. There are now a number of very useful works which add much to our knowledge of America's part in the recognition of Leopold II's International African Association and of the participation of the United States in the 1884-5 Berlin Conference.⁵ But their cumulative effect is still to be felt in studies of the

¹ A. B. Keith, *The Belgian Congo and the Berlin Act*, Oxford 1919, p. 298.

² H. M. Stanley, *The Congo and the Founding of its Free State: A Story of Work and Exploration*, 2 vols., London 1885, vol. 2, p. 394.

³ At the beginning of America's Congo interests, Stanley and everyone else thought that he was a naturalized American citizen because he had taken an oath of allegiance in order to join the Union army. When he realized his error, he underwent naturalization in 1885 in order to protect the copyright on *The Congo* and his other books. See D. M. Pletcher, *The Awkward Years: American Foreign Relations under Garfield and Arthur*, Columbia, Mo. 1962, pp. 308-9.

⁴ George Shepperson, 'The United States and East Africa', in *Phylon* (Atlanta), 13 (1952), pp. 7-35, p. 30.

⁵ For example, see E. Younger, *John A. Kasson*, Iowa City 1955; David M. Pletcher, *Awkward Years*; F. L. Bontinck, *Aux origines de l'État indépendant du Congo: Documents tirés d'archives américaines*, Louvain 1966; R. Louis, 'The Berlin Congo Conference', in P. Gifford and R. Louis (eds.), *France and Britain in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule*, New Haven 1971, pp. 167-220; L. E. Meyer, 'Henry S. Sanford and the Congo: a Reassessment', in *African Historical Studies*, 4 (1971), pp. 19-39; S. M. Jacobs, *The African Nexus: Black American Perspectives on the European Partitioning of Africa*, Westport, Conn. 1981.

origins, course, and consequences of the West Africa Conference of Berlin; and there are several problems, major and minor,⁶ about the role of Americans, official and unofficial, in these complex chains of events spanning three continents, which await scholarly investigation.

A major problem in the interpretation of the United States and this Conference is the appropriate frame of reference in which to set the three Americans who spoke for their country—as well as for Leopold II—at Berlin in 1884–5. Too often, it could be argued, Stanley, Sanford, and Kasson have been made to appear as speculating puppets, representative of an American setting which Mark Twain in 1874 called the ‘Gilded Age’: ‘unscrupulous individualism in a world of fantastic speculation and unstable values . . . the boom times of the post-Civil War years, when unbridled acquisitiveness dominated the national life’.⁷ (Mark Twain’s cynicism culminated, three years before Belgium assumed responsibility for the Congo State in 1908, in his attack on the Belgian sovereign, *King Leopold’s Soliloquy*). Certainly, Stanley and Sanford were on Leopold II’s payroll; and John A. Kasson was obviously no enemy of the Belgian king whose ambitions and intrigues are woven deeply into the fabric of the Berlin West Africa Conference. Indeed, as Sybil E. Crowe, granddaughter of Sir Joseph Archer Crowe, one of the British delegates, declared in her book on the Conference, ‘Both these men [Stanley and Sanford] were extremely active in defending the interests of the Association [Leopold’s organization, the International African Association] at the conference, and their presence in the American delegation explains why it is so often possible during its discussions, simply to read for the words “International Association” those of the “United States”’.⁸ But is it enough to see the American delegation at Berlin merely as a front for King Leopold?

Henry Morton Stanley was not called ‘Bula Matari’ (the Breaker of Rocks) for nothing. He had a determination which had overcome difficulties in the impoverished Wales of his boyhood, in the war-torn America of his adoption, and in Central Africa on the troubled eve of imperialism which would have crushed many another man. Stanley was nobody’s puppet. His greatest weakness, perhaps, in the quarter of a century of his associations with Leopold II was loyalty—although it is clear that, towards the end of Stanley’s life, as the scandals of the Congo regime began to be revealed, his loyalty to the king of Belgians became increasingly strained.⁹ Even the critical Mark Twain saw positive virtues in Henry Morton Stanley. When Stanley went to the United States to lecture after the Berlin Conference, Mark Twain, introducing the explorer to a crowded hall in Boston, praised his ‘indestructible Americanism’ and described him as ‘an untainted American citizen who has been caressed and complimented by half the crowned heads of Europe. . . . He is the product of institutions which exist in no other country on earth—institutions that bring out all the best and most heroic in man.’¹⁰ John A. Kasson, at the second meeting of

⁶ Is there, for example, a minor or a major study implicit in R. W. Leopold’s note in his *The Growth of American Foreign Policy*, New York 1962, p. 28 that President Grover Cleveland, in advocating that the United States should not ratify the General Act of 1885, told Congress that ‘to “share in the obligations of enforcing neutrality in the remote valley of the Kongo would be an alliance”’? Actually, the treaty bound the United States only to

respect the neutrality of the Congo Basin, not to defend it, but Cleveland’s distortion passed almost unnoticed’?

⁷ J. D. Hart (ed.), *Oxford Companion to American Literature*, New York 1956, p. 270.

⁸ S. E. Crowe, *The Berlin West African Conference 1884–1885*, London 1942, p. 97.

⁹ R. Hall, *Stanley*, London 1974, p. 352.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

the Berlin Conference, had spoken similarly of Stanley's fortitude, had stressed his Americanism, and had drawn the attention of its members to Stanley's role in putting the Congo on the map:

Until the year 1874 a large section of the heart of Africa, comprising a great part of its salubrious uplands, was wholly unknown both to geographers and to the statesmen of Europe and America. An American citizen who was qualified by courage, perseverance, and intelligence, and by a remarkable intrepidity and aptitude in exploration, resolved, with the support of English and American friends, to expose, if possible, to the light of civilisation this obscure region. With the peaceful flag of his country over his tent, and at the head of his retainers, he disappeared from the knowledge of his countrymen; and after thirty-nine very long and very dangerous months of exploration and travel, he reappeared with the results of his discoveries which were communicated to the world.¹¹

Bringing 'to the light of civilisation this obscure region'! How very sullied these words seem a hundred years after they were uttered! But they are, in their contemporary setting, a fair expression of Stanley's convictions—which were not dissimilar to those of his mentor, David Livingstone, with whom Stanley has, too often, been unfavourably contrasted. When Stanley, with that journalistic speed which characterized all of his activities, published a few months after the ending of the Berlin Conference of 1884–5 his two-volume work, *The Congo and the Founding of its Free State*, with its characteristic echo of the Victorian work ethic in its subtitle, *A Story of Work and Exploration*, he concluded it with a tribute to Leopold II which, again, a century later, tastes bitter in the mouth, but which, when it was written, was meant sincerely:

All men who sympathise with good and noble words—and this has been one of unparalleled munificence and grandeur of ideas—will be united with the author in hoping that King Léopold II, the Royal Founder of this unique humanitarian and political enterprise, whose wisdom rightly guided it, and whose moral courage bravely sustained it amid varying vicissitudes to a happy and successful issue, will long live to behold his Free State expand and flourish to be a fruitful blessing to a region that was until lately as dark as its deep forest shades.¹²

Such a statement, typical of Stanley's propagandizing for the Congo Free State, both at the Conference and during his lectures in Cologne, Frankfurt, and Wiesbaden in 1884–5, did not lack the Utopian element. It was the same kind of Utopianism as that which the Minnesota Populist, Ignatius Donnelly, in his 1891 futuristic novel, *Caesar's Column*—which gained Stanley's approval¹³—put into his picture of an African state in the late twentieth century: 'New lines of railroad; new steamship fleets upon the great lake; . . . large colonies of white men, settling new states, upon the higher lands of the interior; of their colleges, books and newspapers; and particularly of a dissertation upon the genius of Chaucer, written by a Zulu Professor which had created considerable interest among the learned societies of the Transvaal.'¹⁴ In his approval of Donnelly's futuristic bestseller, Stanley did not fail to note that one of the places in his Utopian African state was called 'Stanley'. In due course, indeed, 'Stanleyville' appeared upon

¹¹ Protocol no. 2, 19 Nov. 1884: page references are given to the version of the Protocols and General Act of the West African Conference in that most useful compilation, R. J. Gavin and J. A. Betley (eds.), *The Scramble for Africa: Documents on the West African Conference and Related Subjects 1884/85*, Ibadan 1973, p. 138.

¹² Stanley, *Congo*, vol. 2, pp. 407–8.

¹³ D. Stanley (ed.), *The Autobiography of Sir Henry Morton Stanley G. C. B.*, Boston, Mass. 1909, p. 433.

¹⁴ Ignatius Donnelly, *Caesar's Column*, edited by W. B. Rideout, Cambridge, Mass. 1960, p. 13.

the map of the Congo. Like Ibsen's Peer Gynt, looking across the Sahara into Africa, with his dream of building 'Gyntiana', his 'virgin city', Stanley's Utopian dream included the projection of his own ego into the African interior.

This complex man was no puppet, manipulated simply by the king of the Belgians. Financially self-interested Stanley undoubtedly was; but at the time of the West African Conference of Berlin, he was also a symbol, if not a spokesman, for the new Americanism which had come out of the war between the states. Having served in both the Confederate and the Union forces, he was part of the process: part of the gold as well as of the gilt of the Gilded Age.

Henry Shelton Sanford also prided himself upon his Americanism, although his gallivantings in the service of Leopold II's African schemes often given him the appearance of a rootless cosmopolitanism. Sanford's role in securing the recognition of Leopold's International African Association by the United States on 22 April 1884, the precursor, perhaps the prerequisite, of Bismarck's Conference later in that year, is now appreciated, particularly since Harriet Owsley's processing of Sanford's papers at the archives in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1959 and since the study based largely upon extracts from these papers by the Belgian scholar, François Bontinck, was published in 1966.¹⁵ Sanford's importance for Leopold at Berlin emerges clearly from this study. Writing to Sanford's widow, four years after his death in 1891, H. M. Stanley declared, 'King Leopold had no more ardent sympathiser in his work than General Sanford . . . at the Berlin Conference the General's aid was most valuable. If any cash value was to be placed on any part of General Sanford's connection with King Leopold, I should say that the period spent at Berlin (December 1884-28 February 1885) deserved most consideration.'¹⁶ But, again, does this demonstrate that Sanford was little more than a puppet of the Belgian king?

Sanford, like Stanley, had his ambitions and his dreams. Sometimes these accorded with the interests of Leopold II's expansionist schemes; sometimes they did not. Son of a wealthy New England family, Sanford was brought up in circumstances which enabled him to make his first visit to Europe when he was eighteen. From 1847 until his death in 1891, he spent much of his life in Europe, studying law at Heidelberg, gaining diplomatic experience at the American Legations in St Petersburg and Frankfurt, and spending eight years as United States Minister to Belgium, during the critical Civil War and early Reconstruction periods in America, when he acted as supervisor of the Federal Secret Service in Europe. Thus, when he entered into a close relationship with Leopold II in the early 1870s, Sanford brought to the service of the Belgian sovereign's African ventures no mean range of diplomatic and political skills. It is, however, important to notice that these were not put exclusively to Leopold's service. Sanford was an American patriot; and, in serving Leopold's expansionist schemes, it is not unreasonable to suppose that he believed that these also promoted American interests. Sanford was representative of the non-isolationist, expansionist group of influential Americans who emerged from the Civil War and who believed that the Union victory, which opened up vast prospects for American economic growth, entitled the United States to take its rightful place as one of the major powers of the world. At the West African Conference of Berlin, the United States had the chance to flex its muscles, to

¹⁵ Bontinck, *Congo*.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 379.

show off what Americans had done and were doing in Africa, and to grab for United States businessmen a share in the expanding commerce of Africa: a commerce which New England textile merchants had pioneered from the 1830s onwards from the East African coast.

To some Americans, however, Sanford's relationship with the Belgian king was cause for suspicion. He who had worked for the American Federal Secret Service seemed, at Berlin in 1884-5, to be an instrument of Leopold II's clandestine operations. Sanford had exerted himself in every possible way to get American ratification of the Berlin Act; but for some Americans his involvement at Berlin was 'one of the principal blocks to United States ratification of the Berlin Act'.¹⁷ Sanford's patriotism, indeed, did not appear unsullied to all of his countrymen.

This suspicion of his motives grew when he organized between 1886 and 1888, for the development of the ivory and rubber trades in the upper Congo regions, the Sanford Exploring Expedition, the first commercial company in the untapped regions of the upper river.¹⁸ Leopold II gave Sanford his permission—but not his blessing, it transpired, because his agents on the spot in the Congo thwarted Sanford's commercial ventures. This was to be the start of Sanford's suspicions of Leopold's motives in Africa. These suspicions were confirmed for Sanford when, as one of the two United States delegates at the Brussels Conference of 1889-90, he watched Leopold II manoeuvre, against the free-trade provisions of the Berlin Act, for a 10 per cent *ad valorem* import duty for all merchandise into the Congo State. This went against Sanford's belief, which he had held since the 1870s, that American trade with Central Africa could be extensive if no artificial barriers were imposed upon it, as he believed would be the case under Leopold's benevolent initiatives. Sanford, who had done so much to promote the General Act of the West African Conference of Berlin, was placed in the ironic position of not being able to exert the pressure of the Berlin Act's prohibition of import duties throughout the vast area of Africa from sea to sea, because his own country had not ratified that Act. In the last week of his life, Sanford wrote to the Belgian Ambassador in Washington to say that Leopold's policies at the time of the Brussels Conference denied all that he, Sanford, had worked for. Had he lived another year, he would have witnessed irony added to irony when the United States ratified the Act of the Brussels Conference.

Some would interpret Sanford's disillusion with Leopold as scoundrels falling out. It is also possible to interpret it, looking back over the two decades of Sanford's association with the Belgian king, as an inevitable separation. How could Sanford have been so naïve as to imagine that he could serve two masters: his own country and Leopold II? It is this element of naïvety in Sanford which strikes one rather than any corruption in his motives. He seems to have believed at the Berlin Conference that his own, his country's and King Leopold's interests were identical. In a few years, King Leopold was to make it only too clear to him that they were not. Sanford may have been correct that the new United States must take its rightful place amongst the powers. But the Machiavellianism of the Old World, as exemplified by Leopold II—and, indeed, by Bismarck—was to prove too much for Sanford, in spite of his two

¹⁷ Meyer, *Stanley*, pp. 34-5.

¹⁸ J. P. White, 'The Sanford Exploring Expedition',

in *Journal of African History*, 8 (1967), pp. 291-302, p. 302.

decades of diplomatic experience in Europe. Perhaps his failure, as regards his own country's interests at Berlin in 1884-5, was due to Sanford's personal limitations: because he might have been, in the words of the former US Secretary of State, Hamilton Fish, a 'diplomatic flea'.¹⁹ But was not the American unwillingness to break with the tradition of the Monroe Doctrine the more responsible?

This is how it appeared to the major delegate of the United States at the Berlin Conference: John A. Kasson, then American Minister in Germany. Not long after the end of the Conference, Kasson summed up his feelings about America's reluctance to shoulder the international responsibility to which, he believed, her growing power entitled her:

It is purely impossible that we remain in the future as completely isolated from foreign advances and aggressions as we have been in the past. It is the proper function of statesmanship to provide for this dangerous future, lest it become a ruinous past . . . Our naked American 'Declaration' [Monroe Doctrine] unsupported by possessions of long range guns is mere vapour in the presence of European self interest backed by Krupp cannon and a purely materialist diplomacy.²⁰

Kasson, like Sanford, was an Easterner by origin in the United States. Republican in politics, he served in the Iowa Legislature and in the House of Representatives before becoming American Minister to Austria-Hungary for four years in 1877, and Minister to Germany from 1884-5. A strong proponent of a professional American foreign service, before becoming the leading American delegate to the Berlin Conference, he had had experience of international conferences as United States delegate to the First International Postal Congress in Paris in 1863. Thus, although John A. Kasson was five years younger than Sanford, he brought to the Berlin Conference in 1884 plenty of political and diplomatic experience.

Kasson respected Henry M. Stanley's achievements in Africa and Henry S. Sanford's sympathy for and involvement in Leopold's African designs; but John A. Kasson was not the kind of man to be dominated by either of his fellow American delegates at Berlin. And yet he has often been envisaged as an pawn of Sanford and, through him, as a puppet of Leopold. On the other hand, Kasson has also been considered to be unduly under the influence of Bismarck, although he did not meet Bismarck personally until the opening day of the Conference, 15 November 1884, two months after his arrival in Germany as American Minister. If Stanley and Sanford have too often been dubbed puppets of Leopold II, Kasson has the distinction of being considered the pawn of Sanford, Leopold and Bismarck! Put bluntly like that, the ludicrousness of attributing an inferior status in the American delegation to Kasson and amongst the national delegates at Berlin in 1884-5 seems apparent. Furthermore, he has sometimes been the victim of what can be interpreted as ill-informed, anti-American prejudice: as when, for example, Sybil E. Crowe declared that Kasson appeared 'to have been distinguished more by verbosity than by brains'.²¹ (If, incidentally, Kasson had plenty to say at the Berlin Conference this may well have been due to his consciousness of speaking for his country at its first major international conference; and to his avowed belief, as an American expansionist, a critic of the

¹⁹ Younger, *Kasson*, p. 343.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 340.

²¹ Crowe, *Berlin West African Conference*, p. 97.

tradition of the Monroe Doctrine, that the United States' point of view and interests must not be muted by the powers of Europe.)

Of the three American delegates at Berlin in 1884-5, John A. Kasson's reputation is most in need of revision. It is too simple to display him as a front-man for Leopold II or as a tool of Sanford and Stanley. As much, if not more than both of these Americans, Kasson was his own man; he took advice from them when it was necessary but he did not hesitate to assert, when it seemed in order, his own opinion. And, unlike Sanford and Stanley, Kasson seems to have had no financial interests in Leopold's African enterprises. He acted according to what he believed to be the interests of his country. For example, when on 22 November 1884 Kasson proposed a further extension to the conventional basin of the Congo which Stanley, the day before, had suggested should be increased (a proposal for which, in private, the British at Berlin claimed the credit²²), Kasson was acting as nobody's pawn. In advocating the extension of the conventional basin of the Congo to the East African coast, Kasson, as much as Sanford, knew of the half-century of New England trade with Central Africa from the east coast. 'Mr Kasson stated on this occasion that the commerce of the United States with the Congo Basin was of as much importance by way of Zanzibar as by the Western Coast.'²³

To cynical, late twentieth-century ears, Kasson may appear guilty of excessive moralizing. But it seems that, within the limitations of his time and temperament, he attempted to keep the interests of the indigenous inhabitants of Central Africa before the attention of the Conference delegates.²⁴ Furthermore, throughout Kasson's speeches he seems to have been aware of the parallels between white settlement in the early American colonies and the colonization of Africa; and he made comparisons of the Central African and the North American frontiers which are not without interest for students of comparative frontiers in history.²⁵ Kasson hoped that Christian missionary activity would not be restricted by the powers in possession of the conventional basin of the Congo, and he worked for its neutralization in time of war. In Kasson's eloquent words:

The first colonies founded in America have been the work of different nationalities. . . . Wars immediately broke out in Europe. . . . The knife, the lance and the torch transformed the peaceful and happy colonies into a desert. . . . It does not appear, then, that any sufficient grounds exist for making Central Africa the seed of strife of the Powers when they make war upon each other.²⁶

Kasson, more than Stanley and Sanford, seems to have appreciated that new conditions demanded new norms. As a patriotic, indeed a nationalistic American, he knew that the New World had to have its own laws; and he saw no reason for the

²² Louis, 'Berlin Congo Conference', p. 197. To be sure, on the East African coast, Britain also had 'large and increasing commercial interests and a stake of perhaps higher political importance than that on the West Coast': Clement H. Hill, 20 Oct. 1884, Memorandum on British interests on the East coast of Africa at the time of the West African Conference of Berlin (Public Record Office, FO 84. 1813. Africa (Slave Trade). Papers relating to the Congo (West African Conference), 1-22 Oct. 1884).

²³ Annexe to Protocol no. 3, 27 Nov. 1884: Gavin and Betley, *Scramble*, p. 153.

²⁴ See e.g. G. Spiller (ed.), *Papers on Inter-Racial Problems communicated to the First Universal Races Congress, London 1911*, London 1911, p. 407, footnote commending Kasson on 'the rights of the indigenous population in the land'; also Kasson on the encouragement of 'productive labour' in Central Africa 'through the permanent establishment of a peaceful regime' (Annexe 13 to Protocol no. 5, 18 Dec. 1884: Gavin and Betley, *Scramble*, p. 220).

²⁵ Shepperson, *United States*, pp. 31-2.

²⁶ Annexe 13 to Protocol no. 5: Gavin and Betley, *Scramble*, p. 220.

invariable extension into Africa of the legislation of the Old World. As it was recorded, when the Conference was discussing riverine legislation, Kasson 'was desirous that it should not be concluded . . . that the Congress of Vienna had the right to establish rules obligatory to the entire world'.²⁷

Kasson, Sanford, and Stanley, in their different ways, were American nationalists at the Berlin Conference. Scholarship during the last quarter of a century, especially since the Sanford²⁸ and Kasson papers have been re-examined, now provides a basis for seeing them in their own right rather than as simple agencies of other individuals, especially of Leopold II. They were conscious of representing the United States at its first big international conference; they were precursors of what Julius W. Pratt called the 'expansionists of 1898' in American foreign policy, of American imperialism; and they anticipated what came to be known as the 'Open Door' in American foreign policy. And, as individuals who had lived through the emancipation of four and a half million American slaves and had witnessed the frustration of their hopes during the Reconstruction period in United States history, they, together with influential Americans such as John Tyler Morgan of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and John N. B. Latrobe, president of the American Colonization society, often felt that the only solution to the embarrassing challenge which blacks presented to American nationalism was the return of the Negro to Africa. To such white Americans, the support of Leopold's schemes at Berlin, leading to the recognition of the Congo Independent State and benefiting from American experiences in Liberia, offered some prospect of settling blacks from the United States in Central Africa.

It was a prospect which did not pass unexamined by Afro-Americans themselves. Indeed, the subject of the response of Afro-Americans to the origins, course, and consequences of the Berlin Conference is one which merits much more study than it has hitherto received.²⁹ A convenient way of approaching the problems and personalities involved is through a brief study of some representative black Americans of the time.

The first is Alexander Crummell, an Episcopalian clergyman who was educated at Queen's College, Cambridge. Outstanding amongst the black élite of his generation, Crummell was no uncritical supporter of Afro-American colonization in Africa. He had spent twenty years in Liberia; and this experience had taught him that, although American blacks were needed in Africa, their settlement and their influence in their ancestral lands were often problematical. At the time of the Berlin Conference, Alexander Crummell (1819-98), back in the United States, was not a young man; and his controversial years in Liberia had taken their toll of his energies. He apparently had little time to spare for special consideration of the Conference. Nevertheless, in his last book, *Africa and America* (1891), there is evidence about his feelings towards Leopold II's ambitions in Africa. The year after Leopold held his scientific conference of 1876 in Brussels, out of which came his International Association for the Exploration and Civilization of Africa, Crummell spoke about this 'great endeavour of Christendom',

²⁷ Protocol no. 5: Gavin and Betley, *Scramble*, p. 179.

²⁸ An earlier use of the unprocessed Sanford Papers was made e.g. by R. S. Thompson, 'Léopold II et Henry S. Sanford', in *Congo*, 12 (1930), pp. 295-331.

²⁹ See e.g. G. Shepperson, 'Notes on Negro American

Influences on the Emergence of African Nationalism', in *Journal of African History*, 1 (1960), pp. 229-312, and 'The Afro-American Contribution to African Studies', in *Journal of American Studies* (London), 8 (1975), pp. 281-301; and especially Jacobs, *African Nexus*.

as he called it, at a meeting of the American Geographical Society in New York. 'I have', he declared, 'a deep conviction that this "International" movement has its foundation in reasonable and thoughtful practicality. . . . The proposal of the King of the Belgians I regard as eminently practical, both with regard to the physical and moral needs of the continent.' And Crummell concluded his address on an enthusiastic note: 'Only let this grand movement be carried out, and I believe that there are people of this present generation who shall witness this noble imagination realised along the whole line of the coast of Africa and throughout its broad central region.' At the back of Crummell's mind when he gave his whole-hearted support to Leopold's African proposal was his strong belief that if Africa was 'ever to be regenerated the influences and agencies to this end must come from *external* sources'.³⁰ As a black Christian minister, Alexander Crummell shared the views of many of his contemporaries that the African diaspora to the New World would be the means whereby Afro-Americans, redeemed and civilized, would return to the land of their ancestors and become the instruments of its regeneration and modernization.

It was a black version of the American myth of 'Manifest Destiny' which coloured the ideas of many Afro-Americans about the African issues that were discussed at the Berlin Conference in 1884-5. Few of them, initially, were as critical of its assembled statesmen as Theodore Holly, the first black Protestant Episcopal Bishop, who had no illusions about them. 'They have come together to enact into law,' he asserted, 'national rapine, robbery and murder.'³¹ Most educated Afro-Americans at this time would have agreed with William Edward Burghardt Du Bois who, in his nonagenarian years in Ghana in the 1960s, remembered that, as a young man on his way to the Negro Fisk University in 1885, he had noted only that, 'The Congo Free State was established and the Berlin Conference of 1885 was reported to be an act of civilisation against the slave trade and liquor. French, English and Germans pushed on into Africa, but I did not question the interpretation which pictured this as the advance of civilisation and the benevolent tutelage of barbarians.'³²

Two Afro-Americans who originally held such views, although they were later to turn drastically against them, were George Washington Williams and William Henry Sheppard. Having completed his pioneering *History of the Negro Race in America* in 1883, Williams turned his attention to contemporary African developments. He was sufficiently respected for his work for the Republican Party to be given a hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1884 and he urged that Leopold's International Association should be recognized. In the Senate's passing of a resolution for this purpose, Sanford's work is undoubtedly far more important than Williams's. But Williams was given encouragement by the Secretary of State, Frelinghuysen, to continue his work for Africa. He had several interviews with Leopold II who appears to have approved his proposal that Afro-Americans should help in the development of the Congo area. George Washington Williams was anxious that the United States should ratify the General Act of the Berlin Conference and he worked actively as a one-man pressure group to this end. But his four months' visit to the Congo in 1890, backed by American businessmen with interests in Africa, changed his mind dramatically. He

³⁰ A. Crummell, *Africa and America*, Springfield, Mass. 1891, pp. 311-12, 320, 323 f.

³² W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois*, New York 1968, p. 143.

³¹ Jacobs, *African Nexus*, p. 71.

criticized the Utopian view of H. M. Stanley on Congo development; and on 18 July, 1890, from Stanley Falls in the Congo, George Washington Williams wrote *An Open Letter to His Serene Majesty Leopold II, King of the Belgians and Sovereign of the Congo*, a caustic document in which, from first-hand experience, Williams, amongst other severe charges against the Leopoldian Congo regime, accused the king of violating 'the General Act of the Conference of Berlin' by maladministration and brutalities in the Congo Independent State.³³ On his return from Africa in 1891, Williams worked for a while in the British Public Record Office, preparing a lengthy manuscript on the Congo.³⁴ But he died before the end of the year. Had his proposed *History of the Independent State of the Congo in Europe and Africa* been finished and published, George Washington Williams might well have come to rival E. D. Morel in the leadership of a Congo reform association. As it was, his *Open Letter*, taking its stand on the General Act of the West African Conference of Berlin, was one of the first public attacks—if not the first—on Leopold's betrayal of the high hopes for Central African development which, for many, black and white, the Conference had engendered.

In his *Open Letter*, Williams anticipated the outspoken attacks on the Congo regime by the courageous Afro-American Presbyterian missionary to the Congo, William Henry Sheppard, which were to bring upon him a libel charge and eight months' imprisonment in 1908.³⁵ Sheppard's criticisms of conditions in the Congo appeared in the *Kasai Herald* in January 1908. Like George Washington Williams's, they were a volte-face based on bitter experience in central Africa itself. Home in America after his ordeal, Sheppard spoke to many meetings and always told the story of the cutting-off of Africans' hands by white rubber merchants and their black agents in the Congo. It passed into black American folkways, as the famous and heavily anthologised verses, 'The Congo', by the American poet Vachel Lindsay (first published in 1914) bear witness:

Listen to the yell of Leopold's ghost
Burning in Hell for his hand-maimed host.
Hear how the demons chuckle and yell
Cutting his hands off, down in Hell.³⁶

In the range of Afro-American attitudes to the Berlin Conference and its consequences, the great black savant Edward Wilmot Blyden, with his honorary membership of the exclusive Atheneum club in London, was far removed from black folkways. Writing in the *North American Review* in 1895, he gave more sophisticated views on the significance of the Conference:

The African problem in Africa, which has puzzled a hundred generations of Europeans, is now engaging the earnest attention and taxing the energies of all the powers of Europe. The decision of the Berlin Conference ten years ago, has placed Europe in relations to Africa such as never before existed between these two continents. Every power of Europe, including Russia, has established or is seeking to establish interests in Africa . . . the conferences at Berlin in 1884-5,

³³ Reprinted in A. Cromwell Hill and M. Kilson (eds.), *Apropos of Africa: Sentiments of Negro American Leaders from the 1800s to the 1950s*, London 1969, pp. 98-107: reference to *Open Letter*, p. 104.

³⁴ J. H. Franklin, *George Washington Williams and Africa*, Washington DC 1971, p. 28.

³⁵ R. Slade, *English-Speaking Missions in the Congo Independent State, 1878-1908*, Brussels 1959, pp. 104-6, 254-6, 368-70, etc.

³⁶ F. O. Matthiessen (ed.), *The Oxford Book of American Verse*, New York 1950, p. 608.

and at Brussels in 1890, assumed for Europe the continent of Africa as its special field of operations. The scramble is over and now the question is how to utilise the plunder in the interests of civilisation and progress.³⁷

In their discussion of the 'utilisation of the plunder', other writers moved closer than Blyden did to a theory of imperialism. W. E. B. Du Bois went further than any other Afro-American writer in this respect. After two postgraduate years at the University of Berlin, Du Bois no longer held the simple views which he took with him to his first university, Fisk, in Tennessee. In his article, 'The African Roots of the War', published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1915, Du Bois's most important contribution to the theory of imperialism, he linked the Berlin Conference to his ideas on imperialism:

... the Berlin Conference to apportion the rising riches of Africa amongst the white peoples met on the fifteenth day of November, 1884. Eleven days earlier three Germans left Zanzibar (whither they had gone secretly disguised as mechanics) and before the Berlin Conference had finished its deliberations they had annexed to Germany an area over half as large again as the whole German Empire in Europe.³⁸

The subject of the German Empire and its relationship with the Berlin Conference dominated one of the most interesting—and unduly neglected—contemporary American publications about it. This was an article by Daniel De Leon, written four years before he joined the Marxist Socialist Labor Party of America, of which he became a leader and outstanding theoretician. De Leon's 'The Conference at Berlin on the West-African Question' appeared in the first volume of the *Political Science Quarterly* of Boston in 1886. It seems to have been the product of the prize lectureship in the Department of International Law at Columbia University, New York, which De Leon held for two successive terms, 1883–9.

De Leon's analysis of the Berlin Conference began with a challenging generalization: 'The Conference at Berlin on the West-African question is an event unique in the history of political science. . . . Diplomatic in form, it was economic in fact; ostensibly international in its bearings, in truth it concerned but one nation; and it was designed to help to solve, for that nation only, a strictly social question.'³⁹ Listening to these lines, one's first thought could well be that this 'one nation' was Belgium, acting through its wily king. It was, however, Germany that De Leon had in mind.

In this way, De Leon moved the focus of the Berlin Conference from Africa to Europe. He scorned the Americans at Berlin in 1884–5; and he castigated the United States for departing from its traditional policy of non-interference in European affairs:

We cannot turn from the contemplation of the Berlin Conference without mixed feelings; admiration for the giant intellect in the chair [Bismarck], and the reverse of admiration for the pigmies who occupied the floor⁴⁰ . . . While Messrs. Sanford, Kasson and Stanley [and others] strutted over the stage, believing that they had a hand in weighty questions of international law

³⁷ Quoted in H. Lynch (ed.), *Black Spokesman: Selected Published Writings of Edward Wilmot Blyden*, London 1971, p. 317.

³⁸ *Atlantic Monthly*, 115 (1915), p. 707.

³⁹ D. De Leon, 'The Conference at Berlin on the West-African Question', in *Political Science Quarterly* (Boston, Mass.), 1 (1886), pp. 91–143, p. 102.

⁴⁰ Apart from Bismarck, De Leon had little respect for any of the other delegates with the exception of Count Kapnist, the Russian delegate. 'His mission was to hold the delegates to the actual work before them, and to prevent them from launching into generalisations for which, at the moment, there was no adequate international crisis': De Leon, 'Conference', pp. 131–2.

and were originating principles of far-reaching importance, they were, in fact, one and all, either led or driven as Prince Bismarck pointed the way, for purposes with which they had no concern.⁴¹

Continually shifting the focus to Europe from Africa, De Leon continued:

But the Conference at Berlin was one of [a] series of measures adopted for the special purpose of checking the emigration from Germany; the bulk of this emigration comes to our shores; and of all the ethnic alloys this country receives, that which proceeds from German is the most valuable. The bare presence of a delegation from the United States at Berlin increased the effectiveness of the Congress in the accomplishment of its special purpose; and that Purpose assuredly was not to the interest of the United States.⁴²

De Leon ended his analysis of the Conference with an intensification of emphasis on the individual which, it could be argued, was self-contradictory for a Marxist of his calibre:

The Berlin Conference will stand as a monument of the restless activity of the man who, overlooking no opportunity, and spurning no means which his genius may suggest or accident may create, steadily pursues his life's aim of welding into one self-reliant and stable nation the German-speaking peoples that are settled in the valleys of the Rhine, the Weser, the Elbe, the Oder, the Vistula and the Danube.⁴³

De Leon's viewpoint is an interesting one, particularly when one recalls that the dominant individual for the Conference, admittedly not present at it, but moving his pawns effectively from afar, is usually believed to be Leopold II. Perhaps this traditional point of view is more perceptive than De Leon's? An illustration of the king of the Belgians attempting to influence the Conference from afar is in his instructions to H. M. Stanley when the great explorer was about to lecture in Cologne, Frankfurt, and Wiesbaden in 1884: 'Speak of the share which the Germans are beginning to take in the manufacture of articles suitable to the natives of Africa. Show them that this share will day by day increase, that it will supply work to Germans who are now obliged to go and seek for some in America, and that it will enable them to remain in their own country. . . . Do not fear to dwell on this theme,' said Leopold to Stanley, 'which is of a nature to please M. de Bismarck.'⁴⁴

This essay began with an epigraph from Arthur Berriedale Keith's study, published in 1919, of the Berlin Act of 1885 and of 'the amendments which must be made in that international compact if it is to serve the high purposes for which it was destined, the extension to central Africa of the benefits of civilisation and freedom of trade'.⁴⁵ Such an approach, together with Berriedale Keith's emphasis on the part played by the United States in the formation of the Congo State and the drafting of the Berlin Act, seems far away from Daniel De Leon's Euro-centred study, with its scorn for the conduct and motivations of his countrymen at the Conference. What, one wonders, would De Leon, who died at the beginning of the First World War, have made of Berriedale Keith's words which were written at the end of it? 'Less than a quarter of a century has availed so to alter the position of the United States that in any discussion of

⁴¹ De Leon, 'Conference', pp. 136-7.

⁴² Ibid., p. 138.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 139.

⁴⁴ Hall, *Stanley*, p. 269.

⁴⁵ A. B. Keith, *The Belgian Congo and the Berlin Act*, Oxford 1919, p. 5.

the future of Africa her voice must have all but decisive weight, as representing the only great Power which is at once in the fullest sense disinterested and fully cognisant of the great issues which must inevitably turn on the wisdom of the final settlement of the affairs of Africa.'⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 298.

The USA, the Berlin Conference, and its Aftermath 1884-1885

PETER DUIGNAN

In Africa, Liberian and Congo affairs constituted the main diplomatic concern of the US government during the period between the Civil War and the end of the century. Americans collectively had little interest in matters outside their own country, and the United States took no part in the seizing of African territory in the 1870s and 1880s. That is not to say that individual Americans were indifferent to developments on the African continent. American merchants continued to trade with Africa; and the American government took an interest in encouraging US trade with Africa and in making Africa a free trade area. American prospectors, engineers, and technicians played major roles in developing its mineral resources; American missionaries worked to bring the gospel to Africans; and American explorers and adventurers were among the foremost in solving the geographical and ethnological puzzles of the interior. And the Congo came to play an important role in US diplomacy.

The name that stands out in the annals of African exploration is that of Henry Morton Stanley. Late in life Stanley resumed British citizenship and accepted a knighthood, but at the time of his explorations in Africa he regarded himself as an American citizen, and his efforts were largely financed by Americans.

Stanley returned to England after the meeting with Livingstone in 1871 to find himself famous. Certain professional explorers and so-called experts on Africa at first refused to believe that he had found Livingstone, declared that the geographical information he published was unbelievable, and accused him of being a fraud; these charges, however, were soon refuted by evidence that he was telling the truth. Some of this opposition and a degree of prejudice against him may have come from the fact that he was regarded as an American and not a Britisher. The unfavourable reception in England led to his emphasizing American mannerisms and an American accent.¹

A few days after Livingstone's funeral in 1874 Stanley suggested to Edward Levy-Lawson, the owner and manager of the London *Daily Telegraph*, that a new expedition to Africa be organized to complete the explorations that Livingstone had not lived to finish and to unravel the African mysteries that Livingstone's death left unsolved. Levy-Lawson agreed tentatively, and a cablegram inviting James Gordon Bennett's

¹ H. M. Stanley, *How I Found Livingstone: Travels, Adventures and Discoveries in Central Africa, Including Four Months' Residence with Dr. Livingstone*, 2 vols., London 1873, vol. 2, pp. 2-5. Several years later he replied to the question, 'Are you an American citizen?' in this way: 'I am undoubtedly a citizen of the United States. I travel under an American passport and always have. I claim and possess all rights of an American citizen. . . I always

have with me the emblem of nationality—in civilised countries the passport—in savage countries the flag of the United States of America, and I have never sought the protection, aid, or counsel of any foreign agent, resident, minister or consul. . . I have sacrificed honours and distinction for having done deeds worthy of honour because I am an American citizen.' Quoted in F. Hird, *H. M. Stanley: The Authorized Life*, London 1935, p. 202.

participation was sent off. The reply was simple and to the point: 'Yes. Bennett';² and thus was conceived in 1874 the Anglo-American Expedition for the Discovery of the Nile and Congo Sources. Following approximately his old route from Zanzibar, Stanley plunged again into Africa and vanished from the world for almost three years. He emerged from the forest 999 days later near the mouth of the Congo. Despite much personal brutality, his had been an astonishing military achievement and an incredible feat of endurance; he was the only white survivor, and more than half of the Zanzibaris who formed the party had died or been killed in fights with people along the river.

Stanley had crossed the continent. Geographically, he had resolved many of the unanswered problems of Africa. He had measured the length and shoreline of Lake Tanganyika and had determined the size of Lake Victoria and proved that it was a single lake. He had discovered a body of water previously unknown to Europeans, Lake Mweru, and had traversed the hitherto unknown course of the mighty Congo. Politically, his letters from Uganda urging that missionaries be sent to the court of M'Tesa (Mutesa) extended British interests into the interior of East Africa and led ultimately to the establishment of the Uganda protectorate. Commercially, Stanley's expedition opened vast regions of Central and East Africa to European and American merchants. In Belgium, Leopold II hoped to gain wealth from the Congo; in Great Britain, Sir William Mackinnon and his associates of the Imperial East Africa Company looked for profits in Kenya and Uganda.

Stanley's reappearance after he had been given up as lost electrified Europe and the United States. In the months following his return to Europe, statesmen and scholars vied in honouring him. The explorer was especially proud of a vote of thanks passed unanimously by both houses of the Congress of his adopted country.³

Another monarch interested in the man who had braved the Congo was Leopold II, king of the Belgians, a wily and capable diplomat and the most astute businessman among the crowned heads of his time. For some time Leopold had considered various projects in the tropics, including Africa, but in the competition for African territory he was handicapped by the fact that his country was not a great power. Nor did Belgium have any time-honoured claims or status in Africa that could be used to bargain or to extend its influence. On 12 September 1876, while Stanley was still in the Congo, Leopold convened at the royal palace in Brussels a distinguished gathering of geographers and travellers, including delegates from Great Britain, Germany, France, Austria-Hungary, Russia, and Italy, as well as Belgium. There were no official American delegates, but near the king's right hand stood Henry Shelton Sanford, who in the 1860s had spent eight years as US minister to Belgium.

Leopold, in his opening speech of welcome, expressed his hope that the meeting would result in an international organization that would finally suppress the slave trade and would open Africa to civilization. Three days later the conference adjourned, having laid the foundation for the International Association for the Exploration and Civilization of Central Africa. Leopold was president, and there was an executive committee consisting of three members, one for each of the three principal language groups of the western world, English, German, and Latin. The British government,

² H. M. Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent: or The Sources of the Nile, around the Great Lakes of Equatorial Africa, and down the Livingstone River to the Atlantic Ocean*, 2 vols.,

New York 1878, vol. 2, pp. 2-3.

³ B. Farwell, *The Man Who Presumed: A Biography of Henry M. Stanley*, New York 1957, pp. 169-70.

however, was reluctant to become involved, even though the International Association was supposedly an unofficial organization. The British member, Sir Bartle Frere, who was to represent English-speaking peoples, was soon appointed governor of the Cape of Good Hope, and Great Britain withdrew. Frere was replaced at once by Henry Shelton Sanford.⁴

Leopold and the executive committee of the newly formed association decided that Stanley was the man to undertake and execute their African projects. On Stanley's arrival in Marseilles early in 1878, Sanford and another member of the committee were on hand to meet him and sound him out. Stanley listened to what they had to say. He was interested, but at the same time he had had his fill of exploring; he was willing to give the International Association the benefit of his experience, but he told Sanford that he would not then consider returning to Africa.⁵

Leopold and his committee persevered. By August 1879 Stanley had recovered his health and spirits, and a life of relative idleness was beginning to pall. He was rebuffed in Great Britain; in spite of the honours he had received, he was unable to persuade anyone on the kingdom to take more than an academic interest in the Congo. A letter from one of the committee men suggested a meeting in Paris, and he was much more receptive than he had been in Marseilles. Accepting Leopold's invitation to the palace at Brussels, Stanley expressed willingness to consider the proposals of a group of financiers, explorers, geographers, and philanthropists from several countries who had gathered there. They evinced a deep interest in Africa and plied him with questions throughout the day.

Some of their questions Stanley could answer offhand; others were unanswerable. Before the meeting broke up, a new organization had been formed—with an initial fund of £20,000 subscribed for immediate use and with every subscriber bound to donate more if necessary. An expedition would be sent to Africa as soon as possible to obtain accurate information on doubtful points and to establish bases for later activities. By unanimous vote, Stanley was invited to take command of the expedition and to act as the committee's representative.

Henry M. Stanley thus became the mainstay of Leopold's plans in Africa, the driving force that made their fulfilment possible. Without his services, the vast Congo basin could have been taken over by one or another of the great powers, and the course of central African history would have been far different. Stanley, believing thoroughly in the benevolence and disinterestedness of Leopold's purposes and the value to Africa and Western civilization of the committee's projects, supported and fostered both.⁶

⁴ H. M. Stanley, *The Congo and the Founding of Its Free State: A Story of Work and Exploration*, 2 vols., London 1885, vol. 2, pp. 33–8; H. W. Wack, *The Story of the Congo Free State: Social, Political and Economic Aspects of the Belgian System of Government in Central Africa*, New York 1905, pp. 8–13. Sanford is usually referred to as General Sanford, and one writer has described him as 'a grizzled American soldier'. He was not, however, a soldier at all, but a career diplomat in days when US diplomatic appointments were usually awarded as prizes in the spoils system. He held diplomatic posts at St Petersburg, Frankfurt, and Paris, before becoming the US minister to Belgium in 1861. In Brussels he was active in watching and thwarting Confederate efforts in Europe. He also assisted the state of Minnesota in obtaining cannon in

Europe to arm its artillery for the Civil War, and for this action he was made a major general in the Minnesota militia—hence the title 'General'. Sanford represented the United States at international conferences in Berlin in 1885 and in Brussels in 1890. Late in life he was the founder and promoter of the city of Sanford, Florida, where his papers are preserved in the Sanford Memorial Library. See the account of his life in the *Dictionary of American Biography* (1928 ff.).

⁵ Stanley, *The Congo*, vol. 1, p. 21.

⁶ Although the *Comité d'Etudes du Haut Congo* was nominally separate and distinct from the International Association, for all practical purposes it shortly became no more than extension of the association.

Stanley's activities during the next few years covered the beginnings of the Congo Free State, with Leopold as its sovereign, and the inception of European penetration into the still unknown regions of the Congo. Stanley set to work with his usual energy; he purchased equipment, interviewed applicants, and engaged suitable men. His task—the organizing of settlements intended to be permanent bases—required that he foresee and provide for all contingencies. Stanley arrived at the mouth of the Congo within a few months, ready to start on his mission.

Unlike his two previous expeditions into the wilds of Africa, this venture was international, but the United States was still a factor. In addition to Sanford in Belgium, the International Association included an American committee in New York presided over by John N. B. Latrobe, president of the still active American Colonization Society and one of the founders of Liberia.⁷

Stanley lived in Africa for most of the next five years, extending his explorations, establishing and supervising stations, surveying and building roads, and negotiating treaties with numerous African dignitaries and potentates who would place themselves under the protection of the International Association. This part of Stanley's mission was not publicized, a circumstance that tended to cast an air of mystery about the expedition and led to the groundless suspicion in some quarters that Stanley, a US citizen, was laying the foundation for an American empire in Africa.⁸

Stanley's contemporaries did not suspect that the association's primary motives were other than philanthropic, humanitarian, and scientific. Its commercial motives were open and apparent, but the public assumed that the commercial development of the Congo would tend automatically toward civilizing and improving the condition of the indigenous people.

While Stanley was establishing stations and obtaining concessions and treaties from local kings and tribal chiefs, other claims to Congolese territories suddenly threatened to disrupt everything the association was trying to do. Portugal, by reason of the discoveries of the early Portuguese explorers, had always maintained a shadowy claim to the Congo, but none of the European powers paid much attention to its claims. In the mid-nineteenth century a rather feeble Portuguese effort to establish authority had been firmly vetoed by Great Britain because traders of several nations were already installed in the Congo and because the slave trade flourished under the Portuguese flag wherever it was seen. Moreover, Great Britain itself had somewhat nebulous claims to Congolese soil, owing to treaties negotiated with several chiefs during British operations against the slave trade. Even so, the vast territory which Stanley had explored and in which he was working on behalf of the association was still not held under international law by any 'civilized' power.

Two sets of circumstances suddenly rendered the Congo important. First, Stanley's explorations suggested that the Congo basin was a region of great potential wealth and could be made accessible; second, the announcement of Pierre de Brazza's explorations and annexations adjacent to the Congo, in the name of France, caused immediate alarm in London and Lisbon. French colonial policy was exclusive. If the

⁷ J. S. Reeves, *The International Beginnings of the Congo Free State*, John Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, ser. 12, XI-XII, Baltimore 1894, p. 18.

⁸ Count Savorgnan de Brazza, the French explorer and empire builder, seems to have shared this suspicion. See A. Maurice (ed.), *H. M. Stanley: Unpublished Letters*, New York 1957, p. 149.

French established themselves firmly, then the merchants, missionaries, and traders of all other nations would be shut out.

British fears of French designs resulted in a long, complicated series of confidential negotiations with the Portuguese that ended in the treaty of 26 February 1884. In its broad provisions, the treaty recognized Portuguese territorial claims and provided for a joint Anglo-Portuguese commission to control navigation and traffic on the Congo River. Although the treaty assured freedom of navigation on the Congo and its tributaries to shipping of all nations, the two powers had disposed of a matter as though only they were concerned. Other nations whose traders were already in the region were completely ignored, and the establishments formed by Stanley for the International Association went unmentioned.⁹

The treaty caused a wave of protest. In March 1884 the French government announced that France would neither recognize the treaty nor consider itself bound by it, and on 18 April a similar announcement was made by the German government. Nor did the treaty meet with unanimous approval in Great Britain. British businessmen with existing interests in the Congo were distinctly displeased at the prospect of subjecting themselves to the inefficiency, maladministration and corruption that they regarded as almost synonymous with Portuguese colonial government. Humanitarians were aghast at the idea of putting additional Africans under the power of a nation that still winked at the slave trade; Protestant missionary bodies were indignant at the possibility that Protestant missions might be handicapped or thwarted by a staunchly Roman Catholic government. Even the strongest proponents of the treaty had to admit that neither governments nor private parties with interests in the Congo had been consulted.¹⁰

The association's legal status in Africa at this time was extremely vague. Its position was somewhat analogous to that of the American Colonization Society in early Liberia: it was exercising sovereignty without any legal or technical right to do so. It was a corporation—a private individual—in competition with recognized sovereign powers. As Stanley said in a letter to an unidentified friend, 'De Brazza with his walking stick, a French flag and a few words in the presence of the whites at Leopoldville, is really stronger than Stanley with his Krupps and all material of war, faithful adherents, aid of natives, etc.'¹¹

Meanwhile Henry S. Sanford had become Leopold's lobbyist in the US. He won the support of the press, business interests, and senators. Sanford even spoke to the US President. During all his efforts, Sanford stressed the humanitarian aims of the association. Sanford, the diplomat, entrepreneur, and owner of vast citrus estates in

⁹ R. Anstey, *Britain and the Congo in the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford 1962, pp. 112-67; S. E. Crowe, *The Berlin West African Conference, 1884-1885*, London 1942, pp. 11-22; H. R. Fox Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland: A Story of International Wrong-Doing*, London 1903, pp. 158-9. Most of the writers who have discussed the Anglo-Portuguese treaty and the resulting Berlin Conference seem to be intent upon proving that Great Britain was motivated solely by philanthropic and humanitarian purposes. Fox Bourne, for example, says that Great Britain insisted upon recognizing the interests acquired

by the association and the trading rights of all nations, and that the treaty was 'subject to its being approved by the other Powers'. Nothing in the text of the treaty indicates any such reservations. Crowe's work is so biased that her statements and conclusions can be accepted only in part and with modifications.

¹⁰ Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, pp. 113-38; C. de K. Boulger, *The Reign of Leopold II, King of the Belgians and Founder of the Congo State, 1865-1909*, 2 vols., London 1925, vol. 1, p. 146.

¹¹ Quoted in Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, p. 169.

Florida, believed the Congo Free State would become 'another Canaan for our modern Israelites' and would discharge the 'black cloud that hung over the South'.¹²

American interest in African trade had been keen for all of the nineteenth century; US merchants had a big share of the market in several ports of West Africa and in Zanzibar. For example in 1860 the US had 28 per cent of the trade with Gambia, 12 per cent with Sierra Leone, and 41 per cent with the Gold Coast. Interest in the Congo officially began in 1878 when the secretary of the navy sent Commodore Robert W. Shufeldt to review trade possibilities in West and East Africa but especially in the Congo.

Also looking to potential American commercial interests, President Chester A. Arthur in his annual message to Congress on 4 December 1883 gave another hint of official US interest in the Congo:

The rich and populous valley of the Congo is being opened to commerce by a society called the International African Association, of which the King of the Belgians is the president, and a citizen of the United States [Stanley] is the chief executive officer. Large tracts of territory have been ceded to the association by native chiefs, roads have been opened, steamboats placed on the river, and the nuclei of states established at twenty-two stations under one flag which offers freedom to commerce and prohibits the slave trade. The objects of the society are philanthropic. It does not aim at permanent political control but seeks the neutrality of the valley. The United States cannot be indifferent to this work nor to interests of their citizens involved in it. It may become advisable for us to cooperate with other commercial powers in promoting the right of trade and residence in the Congo Valley free from the interference or political control of any nation.¹³

Not surprisingly, the United States promptly recognized the sovereign rights of the International Association. There was not only a genuine American interest in the possibilities of the Congo, stimulated by national pride in the fact that an American, Henry M. Stanley, was a key figure in efforts to open the region, but also a suspicion that Great Britain—widely believed by Americans to be a notoriously predatory power—was seeking, unjustly, to pre-empt the Congo.

The association's position was clarified and strengthened on 22 April 1884, while the controversy over the Anglo-Portuguese treaty was in full sway, by a formal American pronouncement:

Frederick T. Frelinghuysen, Secretary of State, duly empowered therefore by the President of the United States of America, and pursuant to the advice and consent of the Senate heretofore given . . . declares that . . . the Government of the United States will order the officers of the United States, both on land and sea, to recognise the flag of the International Association as the flag of a friendly Government.¹⁴

US recognition of the association's sovereign status was followed within a few days by French recognition and on 8 November by that of Germany. In due course the other powers followed suit; the association took its place among the recognized governments of the world, and Leopold II of the Belgians reigned over a vast African region as well.

¹² J. L. Roark, *Masters Without Slaves: Southern Planters in the Civil War and Reconstruction*, New York 1977, p. 169.

¹³ Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1883*, Washington DC GPO 1886, p. ix.

¹⁴ Senate, 'Report of the Secretary of State Relative to Affairs of the Independent State of the Congo', *Senate Executive Documents*, 49th Cong., 1st sess., 1886, no. 196, p. 348.

With the International Association established in the Congo and recognized there as sovereign by several powers, Great Britain and Portugal were faced with the almost unanimous opposition of all Europe. They had no choice but to abandon the attempt to treat the Congo as a private matter between themselves. Consequently, when Chancellor Bismarck of Germany, after consultation with France, invited the United States and other interested powers in early October 1884 to send representatives to Berlin to consider (among other items) the question of 'freedom of commerce in the basin and the mouths of the Congo', the area was positively placed within the scope of international interest.¹⁵

The United States traditionally remained aloof from Old World politics, so the government had some hesitancy in accepting Bismarck's invitation. However, with the understanding that the Conference was purely for discussion and for the establishment of general principles, and that the United States could reserve the right to decline to accept conclusions reached, the government in Washington decided to participate.

The designated representative was John A. Kasson, the American minister at Berlin. Kasson was no novice in international diplomacy and politics. He had served several terms as a member of Congress and as a state legislator. Under President Lincoln's administration he was an assistant postmaster-general, and he represented the United States at the International Postal Congress in Paris in 1863. In 1867 he was on the commission to negotiate postal conventions with Great Britain, France, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy. He was US minister to the court of Vienna from 1877 to 1881, and at the time of Bismarck's invitation he had recently been promoted to the more critical diplomatic post of minister to the German Empire.¹⁶

After he was informed that he would be the US representative, Kasson heard from the German Foreign Office on 20 October 1884 that the Conference probably would hear experts on Africa. He wrote to Henry M. Stanley to ask, 'Can you hold yourself at liberty to be present at Berlin a week before the meeting of the Conference on West African affairs, and during its deliberations?' He was well aware that Stanley was concerned with the International Association and, in view of his government's attitude toward the association, he welcomed the opportunity to have Stanley present its case before the Conference. His letter continued: 'This action will be in harmony with the interests which you represent'. Three days later, having learned from the German Foreign Office that each delegate would be allowed an associate, Kasson at once thought of Sanford, an experienced diplomat familiar with the matters to be discussed and an officer of the association. He cabled Washington on 23 October 1884 to ask 'that the usefulness of Mr Sanford, as such an associate, be taken into consideration'. Secretary of State Frelinghuysen authorized Kasson to use Sanford at his own discretion, provided that no additional expense to the US government was incurred.¹⁷

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 7. To infer or assume, as some writers have done, that Bismarck was a cat's-paw for Leopold, or that the Conference resulted from conniving by Henry Shelton Sanford is to ascribe to Bismarck a weakness that has never been detected, even by his enemies. For reasons of his own, Bismarck saw advantages for Germany in such a conference.

¹⁶ *US Congressional Directory*, 48th Cong., 1st sess., 1884, pp. 27-8. Kasson's record proves that there is little

justification for Sybil Crowe's statement that he was 'distinguished more by verbosity than by brains' or for the idea that he was merely a puppet in the hands of Sanford. See Crowe, *The Berlin West African Conference*, p. 97. See also E. Younger, *John A. Kasson: Politics and Diplomacy from Lincoln to McKinley*, Iowa City 1955, pp. 141-52, 210-28, 278-95, 322-43.

¹⁷ Senate, 'Report of the Secretary of State Relative to . . . the Congo', pp. 16-17.

A further American official—W. P. Tisdale, the government's commercial agent in the Congo state—hurried to Berlin to observe the Conference proceedings. Tisdale was not formally accredited as an associate delegate, but 'at the same time his position was the first and only representative sent by any Government to the State of the Congo' was to be borne in mind.¹⁸

The delegates assembled for the first session on 14 November 1884. Bismarck, as host, accepted the chairmanship and suggested the agenda for consideration. On the second day Kasson made a brief speech, citing the reasons for US participation and the bases of American policy and attitudes. He stressed that vast regions in Central Africa had been first explored by the American citizen and that the International Association, which had established a *de facto* government in the region, included Americans in its membership, adding that 'the blacks will learn from it [the Association] that the civilisation and the dominion of the white man means for them peace and freedom and the development of useful commerce, free to all the world.'¹⁹

Kasson, because of his position of neutrality and international impartiality and because he was aided and advised by Stanley and Sanford, had a strong influence on the Conference, and his words carried weight. When it became clear that many of the delegates had only vague ideas on African geography, Kasson suggested that Stanley enlighten them.

He went to a chart suspended in the room, and immediately engrossed the interest of every delegate, by a vivid description of the features of the Congo basin; and finally of the adjacent country necessary to go with it under the same régime to secure the utmost freedom of communication with the two oceans.²⁰

Kasson thus persuaded the Conference to adopt his suggested definition of the Congo basin, and he steadily used his influence toward the adoption of free trade with and within the areas defined. In other particulars, too, Kasson was active, and the final general act, or convention, of the Berlin Conference bears the imprint not only of Sanford, Stanley, and Leopold II, but of Kasson as representative of the United States. It was also Kasson who brought up the question of the rights of African chiefs in the region. He held that local African authorities had rights to dispose freely of their land and that Africans must voluntarily consent to all dispositions of their territories. The delegates at Berlin quickly ignored Kasson's questions for they would have rendered the proceedings illegitimate.²¹

Roger Louis claims, erroneously, that it was the British diplomat Anderson who had put Kasson up to pushing for free trade in the Congo Basin in the widest possible extent so as to claim as much of the interior as possible for free trade.²²

No British suggestion was necessary for Kasson to suggest this plan. This was the area the American Stanley had explored; this was the area that President Arthur had

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 19–20. Many—possibly all—of the charges and allegations of deception, double dealing, and general villainy laid against Sanford and Stanley seem to have originated with Tisdale. There was an obvious clash of personalities from the start, especially since Tisdale, who maintained that he knew as much about Africa as Stanley did, disagreed with Stanley's conclusions on the economic potential of the Congo. This disagreement did not come out until later, for Tisdale left Berlin without

attending any of the sessions of the Conference. See *ibid.*, pp. 21, 346–87.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 34.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 35.

²¹ See the article in this volume by G. N. Uzoigwe.

²² R. Louis, 'The Berlin Congo Conference', in R. Gifford and R. Louis (eds.), *France and Britain in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule*, New Haven 1971, pp. 167–220, p. 197.

called to Congress's attention in 1883, and suggested it be a free trade area. The Congo was also the area that the secretary of the navy had asked Commodore Shufeldt to investigate in 1878 for US trade possibilities.

As far as free trade goes, the US had been pushing for free trade in Africa at least since 1870. One of the missions of the African Squadron (1842) assigned to patrol the west coast of Africa to stop the slave trade was to seek out trade opportunities for American merchants and to protect their free access to the African market.

The US government never ratified, and hence was never formally bound by, the results of the Berlin Conference. Nevertheless, the US representative signed the convention, and the US government acted in accordance with the principles finally agreed upon.

At Berlin, for the first time, US representatives sat in a multilateral international conference considering issues and territories outside the Western hemisphere. Despite the government's reservations, many people 'viewed with alarm' what they regarded as a radical deviation from the traditions of a century and from the almost sacred precepts established by the Founding Fathers. The isolationist die-hards, led by Congressman Perry Belmont, attacked at once. On 5 January 1885 Belmont introduced a resolution demanding that President Arthur inform Congress just why the United States was participating, and shortly before the inauguration of the new president, Grover Cleveland, he sponsored a resolution that went further:

The House of Representatives, heedful of the admonitions of Washington, and faithful to that neutral policy of separation and peace which our situation and the wisdom of a free people have hitherto enabled us to maintain, hereby explicitly declares its dissent from the act of the President of the United States in accepting the invitation of Germany and France to participate in the International Conference at Berlin.²³

These opponents refused to regard the Congo as a matter of concern for the whole civilized world; Belmont, for example, to the end of his life maintained that this was a purely European problem with which the United States had no concern. In addition, there was an absurd fear that international agreements concerning navigation on the Congo might somehow be twisted into a precedent for international control over the Mississippi.

Belmont, as a Democrat, easily gained the ear of President-elect Cleveland, who was inclined to suspect anything suggesting international entanglement. In his annual message to Congress in 1886, Cleveland stated that since acceptance of the Berlin convention would have made the United States a party to an alliance, he had withdrawn the treaty and expressly refrained from asking the Senate to ratify it. Somewhat ambiguously, he added that the American delegates, despite the reservations under which the United States participated, had signed the convention just as had the plenipotentiaries of the other powers.²⁴

²³ Quoted in Belmont, *An American Democrat: The Recollections of Perry Belmont*, 2nd edn., New York 1941, p. 314.

²⁴ Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1886*, Washington DC GPO 1865-1900, pp. viii-ix. This remark was interpreted by Kasson as an unwarranted reprimand. He replied in a

lengthy article in the *North American Review* (Feb. 1886) in which he refuted, point by point, all the arguments that had been adduced by Belmont or other traditionalists. For the full anti-treaty argument, written by Belmont, see House of Representatives, *Participation of the United States in the Congo Conference*: H. Rep. 2655, 48th Cong., 2nd sess., 1885. One may suspect an underlying

Nevertheless, the concern of the United States with what was happening in Africa and the government's policy of maintaining the rights of its citizens in that part of the world were matters that transcended temporary mutations of party politics. The outward thrust of the United States was becoming too powerful to be restrained by a tradition of isolationism that even then was beginning to lose its vitality.

The tradition that the government should aid and foster foreign commerce was as ancient as the tradition and policy of political isolation. American industries were growing with tremendous speed. Though numerous merchants and other business people undoubtedly regarded the domestic market as capable of indefinite expansion, there were many others who foresaw a time when the United States would no longer be able to absorb all the products of its own mills, factories, and farms. In addition, the railway network was approaching competition, and heavy industry no longer needed capital from London or Amsterdam. American capitalists and entrepreneurs began to think of overseas investment opportunities that promised greater returns than domestic loans.

Political isolation and the concentration of the American people upon domestic affairs did not lessen the considerable latent interest in Africa, and particularly in the possibilities offered by the still unknown country of the Congo. This interest had shown itself, even before the Berlin Conference, in the assignment given to Commodore Robert W. Shufeldt in 1878 as commander of the USS *Ticonderoga*. He was directed by the secretary of the navy to proceed first to Liberia, where he would, if necessary, act as umpire in the boundary dispute between Liberia and Great Britain. He would then 'visit both the western and eastern coasts of Africa and hold such intercourse with the natives to whom he could obtain access as would enable them to appreciate the advantages of trade with the United States'. He was also instructed to visit Madagascar and other places around the world, all with a view to promoting foreign commerce.²⁵

In its cruise down the west coast of Africa, the *Ticonderoga* touched at the mouth of the Gabon, where Shufeldt observed with approval the activities of the American missionaries and spent several days at Fernando Po. In May 1879 the ship anchored in the Congo River as 'the first American ship of war which can be said to have really entered the Congo'—the others having anchored at its mouth off Shark's point—while Lieutenant Francis J. Drake and Paymaster William M. Thomson investigated the commercial possibilities of the region. They found that millions of dollars' worth of such raw materials as ivory, palm oil, rubber, sesamum oil, gum copal, groundnuts, and orcin (dye stuff) were being exported annually from the river's mouth, while vast amounts of cotton goods, liquors, gunpowder, brass rods and rings, and all sorts of metal utensils were being imported. The only article of American production coming into the Congo was tobacco, and it was imported by Dutch and British, not American, traders. Drake's brief survey, moreover, led him to believe that the country was well adapted to the cultivation of almost anything that could be raised in Southern Europe.

In spite of the generally optimistic tone of his officers' reports, Shufeldt was sceptical about US commercial possibilities in the Congo. Dutch traders established at Banana

element of partisanship: President Arthur's administration was Republican; Cleveland and Belmont were Democrats.

²⁵ Department of the Navy, *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1880*, Washington DC, GPO 1880, p. 27.

near the mouth of the river, scenting a threat to themselves and their trade in the *Ticonderoga's* arrival, had but poorly concealed their animosity toward Shufeldt and his officers and crew. Shufeldt reported, in substance, that these traders were so firmly entrenched that any effort to break their monopoly would be virtually hopeless.²⁶

One American commercial venture was launched in the Congo Free State however. The Sanford Exploring Expedition established in 1886 was given the first trade concession in the Congo. Starting with 60,000 dollars in capital, the company hoped for quick profits from the ivory trade. Henry S. Sanford hired Lieutenant Emory H. Taunt (on leave from the US Navy) to lead the expedition, and planned four stations along the Congo River, to be connected by a steamer. Some ivory was brought out in 1886, but a boat that had to be taken up country in sections was not ready until 1887, and Stanley then borrowed it for forty-five days to aid the Emin Pasha relief force. By late 1887 the steamer *Florida* was busy in commercial trade; and it was soon joined by the *New York*. In one year Sanford's group brought 35,000 pounds of ivory and 61,000 pounds of rubber. Taunt meanwhile had returned to Europe to be fired as an alcoholic by the US Navy and court-martialed as AWOL; Sanford got him a job in 1888 at \$4,000 a year as US commercial agent for the Congo Free State. By 1888 the company needed new capital, but Sanford's appeal was ignored by American businessmen. A merger was concluded in 1889 with a Belgian firm, and the first US commercial company in the upper Congo River ended its operation.²⁷

To the average American in the last few decades of the nineteenth century, however, the commercial possibilities of Africa were secondary to a resurrection of earlier missionary fervour. Missionaries had focused primarily on Africa, and the publication of Stanley's sensational accounts of cannibalism and other 'depravities' stimulated evangelical Christians in both Europe and America to carry the gospel to what they saw as a benighted region.

None of the American or European missionaries who had been prominent in Africa since the start of the missionary movement had penetrated the wilderness of the Congo basin before the 1870s. Once it became known that the Congo Valley could be entered via the river's mouth, evangelical associations quickly responded. The first to make the attempt came from England in 1878, sent by a group of dissenter philanthropists.²⁸

By 1884 the philanthropic group that sponsored and supported the project was in financial difficulties. The missions themselves were not prospering as had been hoped, and the missionaries gladly accepted the American Baptist Missionary Union's offer to take over their work. This was an old, well-established organization that had developed a policy very different from that of the Livingstone Inland Mission. The Livingstone missionaries conducted their work in several languages and regions; the American Baptists preferred to concentrate in a central mission using one language, and from this base to extend their efforts gradually, one step at a time. From the central mission the Baptists branched out to a circle of satellite stations and eventually advanced to new regions.²⁹

²⁶ See Shufeldt's reports to the secretary of the navy—21 May, 3 June, 19 June, 20 June 1879—in the Robert W. Shufeldt Papers, 1864–1884, Naval Historical Foundation Collection, Library of Congress. See also 'The Congo Commission', *Bradstreet's* 10 (1884), p. 146.

²⁷ J. P. White 'The Sanford Exploring Expedition',

Journal of African History, 7 (1967), pp. 291–302.

²⁸ R. M. Slade, *English-speaking Missions in the Congo Independent State (1878–1908)*, Brussels 1959, pp. 32–77.

²⁹ Shortly after taking over the American Baptists closed one remote station and turned another over to a Swedish missionary organization. A few years later still

For some years the Baptists and the Disciples of Christ, who maintained a single mission, were the sum total of American missionary efforts in the Congo. During the 1880s Bishop William Taylor and Bishop Joseph C. Hartzell of the Methodist Episcopal Church investigated the Congo at different times with the idea of establishing a chain of Methodist missions, but the plans were not carried out during the nineteenth century.

After the Baptists, the next major American missionary effort in the Congo was undertaken by the Southern Presbyterian Church, prodded originally by a young black minister, William H. Sheppard. A native of Virginia and a graduate of Hampton Institute and Tuscaloosa Theological Institute, Sheppard had aspired from childhood to be a missionary to Africa. Shortly after his ordination in 1887 he approached the mission office of his Church, which was reluctant to send him to Africa alone. In 1890 a second volunteer presented himself, the Reverend Samuel N. Lapsley of Anniston, Alabama, and that same year the two young ministers, one white, the other black, set out for the Congo, to explore for a site where they might commence their work.³⁰

The two young men travelled together until Lapsley died of an African fever, like so many Europeans and Americans before him. Undiscouraged, Sheppard continued alone. Suspicious tribesmen once spared his life because they believed him to be the reincarnation of a legendary chief (he did not disillusion them). Eventually he established himself at Leubo in a region deep in the interior. Before his final return to the United States many years later, he had the satisfaction of seeing the mission he had founded attracting converts by the hundreds and expanding into one of the most important centres of Christianity and modernization in central Africa.³¹

The Baptists and the Presbyterians virtually complete the nineteenth-century story of American missionary efforts in the Congo. The Disciples of Christ, at the station at Balenge that they took over from the Baptists, had many misfortunes, including the inevitable deaths from fever, and did not become firmly established until the end of the century; their work in the Congo did not really begin until the twentieth century.

During the 1880s and early 1890s the attitude of the American people was changing, and the traditions of isolation and non-involvement were gradually ceasing to be regarded as immutable laws. When a second conference to discuss the Congo and African affairs assembled at Brussels in 1890, the United States took part without the opposition that had attended its participation in Berlin. The American delegate was Sanford, who had left Leopold's service and was selected because of his familiarity with the diplomatic and legal problems of the Congo. The original Berlin convention was amended slightly to enable Leopold's government in Africa to raise needed revenue by charging non-discriminatory tonnage and duties, and a further agreement was adopted that, it was hoped, would restrict the traffic in liquor and firearms.

But no account of the United States and the Congo is complete without mention of Richard Dorsey Mohun. Ever since the recognition of the Congo Free State, US policy had maintained a commercial agent there to represent American interests, and in 1892 Mohun was appointed to the position. He went to Africa by way of Brussels, where he

another detached station, at Balenge on the equator 700 miles from the mouth of the Congo, was turned over to a Disciples of Christ Mission from the United States.

³⁰ W. H. Sheppard, *Pioneers in Congo*, Louisville, Ky. n.d., pp. 11-15.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 91-157; J. Du Plessis, *The Evangelisation of Pagan Africa*, Cape Town 1930, pp. 216-21.

paid his respects to Leopold II, the sovereign of the Free State, and became convinced of the king's determination to bring peace and civilization to the region.

Since trade between the United States and the new state was still almost non-existent, Mohun began to investigate its commercial potential, travelling into areas not seen by Westerners previously. Among his earlier reports to the State Department is one that is extraordinary as an official dispatch but typical of Mohun:

I desired to see the natives making cloth, and asked permission of the chief to visit the town, which was readily granted. I took only six men with me armed with revolvers under their shirts. When I had gotten about ten minutes distance from the town I was most foully attacked from the bush with spears and poisoned arrows. Fortunately none of my men were struck, and before they could throw their arrows again we opened fire. We captured the village and burned it to the ground to teach them a lesson. This is only one of five or six times I have been compelled to fight during the past six months.

The whole eastern boundary of the State is now shut by the Arabs, and all the white men who were in the different posts have been killed. Their bodies were afterwards eaten by the large number of cannibal slaves attached to the caravans.³²

The latter part of Mohun's statement refers to the fact that the Congo Free State authorities had suddenly found themselves at war with the Swahili speaking Muslim slave traders from the east coast who were established well within the boundaries of the state and who were bitterly resentful of the efforts to suppress their commerce. Such a war was regarded in Europe and America as a struggle between barbarism and civilisation—between slavers and the heralds of peace and freedom. The Congo forces were heavily outnumbered by the Arabs and their native allies, and when Mohun was asked to replace the Belgian officer who was seriously ill, he did not hesitate to join the conflict. In a short time he was acting as chief of Free State artillery, and in this capacity he took a leading part in most of the battles.³³

Before the war ended with the complete defeat of the Arabs, Free State authorities sent an expedition to determine the practicability of a water route from Lake Tanganyika to the Lualaba River (the upper Congo), with Mohun as second in command. The Belgian commander to the expedition fell ill, and Mohun took charge and continued until the expedition had completed its task. The US government never took the slightest exception to his highly undiplomatic activities. Far from disavowing Mohun and his actions, the government seemed to approve; after the completion of his term of office, he was appointed to the still important post of consul at Zanzibar—a promotion that he would have not received had he been a *persona non grata*. He remained at Zanzibar for three years before resigning from US service to devote the rest of his life to Africa and the Congo Free State. He led exploring parties into Katanga to verify rumours of the extensive mineral wealth in that region, and later travellers found him constructing telegraph lines through the wilderness.³⁴

³² Mohun to the State Department, 23 Dec. 1892, quoted in C. T. Brady, *Commerce and Conquest in East Africa*, Salem, Mass. 1950, pp. 200–1.

³³ The Richard Dorsey Mohun Papers, National Archives, Washington DC. See also R. D. Mohun, 'The Death of Emin Pasha', *Century Magazine*, 49 (1894–5), pp. 591–8.

³⁴ Mohun Papers, *passim*; Brady, *Commerce and Conquest*, pp. 113, 209–10; F. Marcossou, *An African Adventure*, New York 1921, pp. 245–6; Boulger, *The Congo State*, pp. 316–17. Leopold made Mohun a Chevalier of the Royal Order of the Lion of the Congo for his services in the Arab war, an honour that he accepted subject to the approval of his own government.

With Mohun, the more spectacular part played by Americans in opening the Congo area comes to an end. Americans have continued to take part in the affairs of the Congo, but their roles have been prosaic in comparison with those of Stanley, Mohun, and Sheppard. Before Stanley's incredible voyage down the river, inner Africa was the land of Rider Haggard's romances, a lost world where any day the impossible might become a reality; after Stanley and his successors, inner Africa became almost as familiar as the prairies of Kansas. The Americans who assisted in opening the Congo were filling roles in the tradition of the many other pioneers who subdued the wilds of North America.

It was in the early years of the twentieth century, also, that large numbers of Americans directed their attention toward the Congo and attempted to persuade the US government to intervene diplomatically in the affairs of that presumably independent country. Americans and Europeans had generally welcomed the establishment of the Congo Free State, seeing in it an instrument for the final abolition of the slave trade and of such abominations in Victorian eyes as cannibalism, wife purchase, and other tribal practices. The Congo Free State, it was believed would be an agency to facilitate the spread of Christianity and would bring law, order, and civilization to peoples who were universally believed to be deep in savagery. But shortly before the close of the nineteenth century, disturbing rumours reached Europe and the United States that all was not well in the Congo. The Congo Free State, far from being an instrument of enlightenment, seemed as brutal, ruthless, and savage in its treatment of the Africans as Tipu Tib's slave raiders. According to some reports, Leopold II's officials were as predatory a pack of human wolves as ever disgraced the race, their only interest was in enriching their royal master and themselves, and many of their activities in pursuit of this goal were so fiendish as to defy description.

The Congo had become Leopold's private fief. The Belgian Parliament unfortunately had permitted Leopold's assumption of sovereignty over the Congo Free State on condition that the national treasury of the Kingdom of the Belgians should incur no responsibility whatsoever. The funds to defray the Congo's necessary expenses must come from its own resources and from the king's private fortune. Leopold hoped to reap a profit from the Congo, at least from the extensive portions designated as royal domain. The sudden rise in the world's consumption of rubber seemed to solve the Congo's financial problems, for wild rubber was one of the region's major products. But to obtain sufficient quantities of rubber to cover the state's expenses and give Leopold a satisfactory income, it was necessary to assign quotas to each district. No questions were asked about the means by which the Africans were persuaded to turn in the required amounts of rubber—and they were people who were accustomed to working for subsistence only; they had no desire to do anything else. There can be no doubt that some of the officials, as well as concessionaries, were brutal and callous in their methods of persuasion.³⁵

Among the first to call attention to the abuses caused by the quota system was an American Baptist missionary, J. B. Murphy, who sharply criticized the 'rubber system' in 1895. The following year a Swedish missionary named Sjöblom confirmed Murphy's statements and added his own. Two years later an article in the *Century*

³⁵ R. Lemarchand, *Political Awakening in the Belgian Congo*, Berkely 1964, pp. 33-4.

Magazine entitled 'Cruelty in the Congo Free State', by Edward James Glave, a young English adventurer-explorer, served further to bring attention to conditions and practices in the Congo.

Glave had been with Stanley in 1883, establishing the first stations in the Congo basin. He was familiar with Africa and was by no means predisposed to criticize Leopold's government or officials, nor did he have any inhibitions toward using force in compelling Africans to obey. In 1889 Glave resigned from service in the Congo Free State, went to the United States on a lecture tour, and shortly left with a single companion to journey into the then unexplored interior of Alaska. He was engaged in 1893 by *Century Magazine* to return to Africa (it may be more accurate to say that he persuaded the magazine's management to finance his return). He proposed to go afoot across the continent studying conditions, observing, photographing, and doing whatever possible to combat the dying but still lively slave trade. He reached the mouth of the Congo in April 1895, having walked across the continent—a feat comparable to Stanley's original achievement. Before he could embark for Europe, however he died unexpectedly from the African fever that had taken such a toll of white men's lives.³⁶ Writing shortly before his death, Glave noted that even in a district administered by a Belgian official noted for justice, enlightenment, and humanity

... the natives have complained that they are compelled to bring rubber, which is brought by the officers of the Congo Free State; half of the price paid goes to the Mgwana, or chief, of the district, and half goes to the natives. Many villagers refuse to bring rubber; they are attacked, and killed, or taken prisoners.³⁷

Glave indicted the administration of the Congo Free State in bitter words:

The state conducts its pacification of the country after the fashion of the Arabs, so the natives are not gainers after all. The Arabs in the employ of the state are compelled to bring in ivory and rubber, and are permitted to employ any measures considered necessary to obtain this result. They employ the same means as in days gone by, when Tippu Tib was one of the masters of the situation. They raid villages, take slaves, and give them back for ivory. The state has not suppressed slavery, but established a monopoly by driving out the Arab and Wangwana.³⁸

Equally devastating were the reports derived from the pen of George Washington Williams, America's first major black historian. Williams, a Pennsylvanian by birth, had begun his career by serving with distinction in the United States Colored Troops; he subsequently became an attorney, a member of the Ohio state legislature, a journalist, and an author. In 1883 Williams published his two-volume *History of the Negro Race in America*, a pioneer work, and made a name for himself as a distinguished figure in black intellectual life. Williams originally favoured Leopold's enterprise in the Congo as a humanitarian venture. But having visited the Congo in 1890, Williams changed his mind and submitted Leopoldine rule in the Congo to a devastating analysis that presaged all later criticisms.

³⁶ R. H. Russell, 'Glave's Career', in *Century Magazine* 28, no. 50 (1895), pp. 865-8. Glave's journal and records of his journey and adventures were published posthumously by the magazine.

³⁷ 'Cruelty in the Congo Free State: Concluding Extracts from the Journals of the Late E. J. Glave', in *Century Magazine*, 32, no. 54 (1897), p. 699.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 705-6.

These bad conditions in the supposedly philanthropic Congo Free State quickly attracted the attention of humanitarians in Europe and the United States. In Great Britain a noted humanitarian, Edmund Morel, was instrumental in organizing the Congo Reform Association, and in several books he castigated in vitriolic terms Leopold's government and administration in the Congo.³⁹

But defenders of the Congo Free State, despite the allegations and a certain amount of circumstantial evidence, categorically denied the truth of the statements made by Morel, Glave, and others. The correspondent of the *Chicago Tribune* found no evidence at all to support stories of wholesale atrocities and cruelty.⁴⁰ Likewise, Edgar Wallace—whose fame as a writer of mystery stories has obscured the fact that he was an outstanding newspaper correspondent and, in later life, a hard-working Member of Parliament—investigated the Congo stories on behalf of the London *Daily Mail* and found little to substantiate the charges.⁴¹

Henry Wellington Wack, a prominent New York attorney interested in African affairs, came to the defence of the Congo Free State and charged unequivocally that the allegations of wholesale abuse of Africans and atrocities against them were part of a programme to discredit Leopold's government so that other powers and interests could take over.⁴² Wack took particular exception to the reports of Sir Roger Casement, the British consul at Boma, in which all sorts of horrors were related. Wack asserted that Casement's reports, which were regarded by many as completely authoritative because of his official position, were almost entirely based upon hearsay, and that one instance which Casement claimed to have investigated would not stand analysis. (Wack was probably a paid agent of Leopold.)

The gruesome stories coming out of the Congo were not all true. But the facts were grim enough, and reports concerning abuses found wide credence in the United States and Europe. Almost immediately an American branch of the Congo Reform Association was organized, and a lengthy memorial was submitted to the US Senate.⁴³ In September 1904 Morel, who was in the United States to assist in organizing the association, obtained an interview with President Theodore Roosevelt and presented a petition urging the diplomatic intervention of the United States. Roosevelt was not moved; it might be said that he was unfavourably impressed with Morel. He saw no reason to involve the United States in a diplomatic controversy in which it would be unable to take action and in which neither treaty obligations nor national interests were involved. In a letter to Eugene A. Philbin on 28 September 1904, Roosevelt quoted Secretary of State John Hay: 'It is a well-meant impertinence . . . for Englishmen to come to us to take up their Congo quarrel.' Two years later, the Congo Reform Association having been very active in the meantime, Roosevelt wrote to Henry Cabot Lodge: 'the only tomfoolery that anyone seems bent on is that about the Congo Free State outrages, and that is imbecile rather

³⁹ E. D. Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, London 1902, pp. 327-42; id., *King Leopold's Rule in Africa*, London 1904; id., *Red Rubber: The Story of the Rubber Slave Trade Which Flourished on the Congo for Twenty Years, 1890-1910*, 2nd edn., Manchester 1920. Morel's objectivity suffers from the fact that he was emotionally an almost professional sympathizer with the underdog. This tendency led him frequently to accept at face value, without corroborating evidence, the most lurid reports.

⁴⁰ F. Starr, *The Truth about the Congo*, Chicago 1907. See also L. H. Gann and P. Duignan, *The Rulers of Belgian Africa, 1884-1914*, Princeton NJ 1979.

⁴¹ E. Wallace, *The Autobiography of a Mystery Writer*, Garden City NY 1929, pp. 189-95.

⁴² Wack, *The Story of the Congo Free State*, p. 16.

⁴³ Senate, 'Memorial concerning Conditions in the Independent State of the Congo', *Senate Executive Documents*, 58th Cong., 2nd sess. (1904), no. 282.

than noxious'.⁴⁴ Strictly speaking, the US government did not enter into the Congo controversy though American public opinion and inquiries made by the State Department exercised some influence in bringing about reforms.

⁴⁴ E. Morison (ed.), *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, 8 vols., Cambridge, Mass. 1951, vol. 4, p. 958, vol. 5, p. 439.

The Berlin Conference, West African Boundaries, and the Eventual Partition

JOHN D. HARGREAVES

I

A simple reading of the Berlin Act should suffice to show that the Conference of 1884-5 did not, in any literal sense, 'partition Africa'. Nevertheless, as emotions raised by the commemoration of the centenary confirm, a widely held myth does associate the Conference with territorial partition, and in a wider sense with the subjection of Black Africa to European colonial control. The power of such myths does not depend primarily on their exact correspondence with historical evidence, and there is no intention in this paper to use historical pedantry to provide covert justification for colonial imperialism. The aim is simply to see whether the Conference did indeed play an important part in expediting territorial partition, or whether it is better considered in relation to some different phase of Afro-European relations.

One broad hypothesis which might connect the Conference to the partition would suggest that by 1884 direct colonial control of African lands and peoples had become a conscious aim of European governments, and that the Conference was a collective endeavour to create conditions for this. I do not find much evidence for this in the other papers in this volume, or elsewhere. What was increasingly exercising European governments and commercial enterprises by 1884 was the control of *access* to the continent, as shown by claims to regulate trade or impose taxes on coasts and rivers. Much of the Berlin Act was designed to define a code of international law and practice within which this might be done. But—with the important exception of the Western Sudan, where French military officers were securing official support for professional ambitions—all governments of the period feared the financial and human costs of establishing authority over the African interior, and the regulation of inland penetration was deliberately excluded from the Berlin Act. The spirit of the Conference was that of old-style free trade imperialism, anticipating the gradual extension of European enterprise (commerce, civilization, and Christianity) rather than military intervention by national states.

Even if this is recognized, it might remain possible to argue that the Conference *did* advance the process of partition by precipitating a series of bilateral boundary agreements—some concluded as extra-mural activities by delegates to Berlin—which had the effect of changing the speed, and perhaps the course, of European penetration. The second part of this paper was therefore prepared to show how far, in the several areas of inter-European contact, the period of the Conference did in fact mark significant stages in the partition process. It aims simply to summarize the progress of international negotiations in regard to each of the future intercolonial boundaries in

West Africa; to consider some of the specific issues perceived in each case to be at stake; and to recall when and how these issues were eventually resolved.¹

After this somewhat prosaic review, the third section returns to a more general discussion of the relationship between the Berlin Conference and the eventual partition of the continent.

II

1. *Senegal-Gambia*. In Senegambia, the process of partition can be traced back to the Treaty of Versailles of 1783. This priority can be explained by long-standing competition among Dutch, French, and British to control routes of access to sources of gold and gum—two commodities which (unlike slaves) were in limited supply, and so highly valued in mercantilist strategy. The treaty assigned 'the river Senegal and its dependencies' to France (including the forts of St Louis, Podor, Galam, Arguin, and Portendic, and the island of Gorée) while guaranteeing to Britain 'the possession of Fort James and of the River Gambia'. This apportionment of rivers was confirmed by a convention of 7 March 1857, by which France ceded to Britain her factory at Albreda in the Gambia, while Britain renounced trading rights at Portendic in Mauritania. The question of a fixed land boundary arose only in the 1870s, when the French found themselves in conflict with Muslim leaders whose authority extended to the banks of the Gambia. An Anglo-French Agreement of 10 August 1889 defined a highly artificial frontier, running roughly ten kilometres to the north and south of the lower banks of that river.²

2. *Portuguese Guinea*. Britain had withdrawn an old claim to the island of Bulama in 1870, following arbitration by President Grant. Portugal's remaining and long-standing claims were finally settled by a convention with France of 12 May 1886, the basis of the present boundary.³

3. *Guinea-Sierra Leone*. An Anglo-French convention of 28 June 1882 established a demarcation line along a watershed which bisected Samu chiefdom, following a meeting of Boundary Commissioners in Paris. Although this was rejected by a Committee of the Chamber of Deputies in February 1884, the two governments continued to honour it in practice. The boundary was confirmed and extended inland by further Anglo-French Agreements of 10 August 1889 and 21 January 1895. The Isles de Los, off Conakry, remained British until the 'Entente Cordiale' of 8 April 1904.⁴

4. *German claims in Guinea*. In January 1885 Nachtigal hoisted the German flag at Dembia, citing a treaty secured by the Württemberg trader F. Colin. The German government renounced this claim in a Franco-German Protocol of 24 December 1885.⁵

¹ Basic references only will be cited, chiefly to Sir E. Hertslet, *The Map of Africa by Treaty*, 3 vols., London 1909, 3rd edn. (reprint London 1967); J. D. Hargreaves, *Prelude to the Partition of West Africa*, London, 1963; J. D. Hargreaves, *West Africa Partitioned*, 2 vols., vol. 1: *The Loaded Pause*, London 1974, vol. 2: *The Elephants and the Grass*, London 1985. Further references may be found in these books.

² See Hertslet, *Map of Africa*, vol. 2, pp. 713, 716-18,

729; Hargreaves, *West Africa Partitioned*, vol. 1, pp. 82-5, 243-6.

³ Hertslet, *Map of Africa*, vol. 2, pp. 673-4; Hargreaves, *Prelude*, pp. 47-9, 83-5.

⁴ Hertslet, *Map of Africa*, vol. 2, 723-5, 730, 757-8; Hargreaves, *Prelude*, pp. 247-52, 289-94.

⁵ Hertslet, *Map of Africa*, vol. 2, p. 655; Hargreaves, *Prelude*, p. 323.

5. *Sierra Leone-Liberia*. After protracted and inconclusive negotiations the government of Sierra Leone, whose claims were based in part on treaties and in part on the alleged preferences of African rulers, became anxious in the later 1870s to collect customs duties on the disputed coast. In March 1882 Liberia agreed under naval pressure to accept a boundary near Cape Mount; this was later moved north to the Mannah river, and defined by an Anglo-Liberian convention of 11 November 1885.⁶

6. *Ivory Coast-Liberia*. In 1885 French claims on the Ivory Coast were confined to the region of her *comptoirs* (Assinie, Grand Bassam, and Davou); as late as 1887 Etienne decided not to try to enforce old treaties with rulers further west. Only in April 1889, after Binger's journey revealed new possibilities of inland penetration, were territorial claims advanced here. In accordance with the procedure agreed at Berlin these were notified to signatory powers in 1891; Britain, despite long-standing commercial connections, did not object. The boundary was defined by a Franco-Liberian Agreement of 8 December 1892.⁷

7. *Ivory Coast-Gold Coast*. The three *comptoirs* established by France in 1843 were bordered by Akan peoples closely linked with those in the Gold Coast Colony. The linkages facilitated the evasion of British customs duties and the import of firearms into Asante, but did not greatly facilitate the plans of the French merchant Verdier to penetrate interior trade routes. In 1880 the British proposed that a Joint Commission should settle a frontier locally; this did not meet until December 1883, and quickly became deadlocked. Thereafter Anglo-French conflicts intensified and spread further inland. The Agreement of 10 August 1889 defined a frontier as far north as Nougoua, when it was to be extended northwards 'in accordance with the various treaties . . . concluded with the natives'; but its demarcation was not finally completed until 1903.⁸

8. *The frontiers of German Togo*. In December 1879 the British, seeking customs revenue, extended the eastern boundary of the Gold Coast to Denu and Aflao. The French feared further extensions into Eweland, where British commercial influence was strong. This was prevented by German intervention in Little Popo during 1884, and by Nachtigal's Treaty with Mlapa, the Ewe chief of Togo, on 5 July 1886. A boundary was agreed by British and German Commissioners on 14 July 1886, and extended northwards in December 1887, leaving a Neutral Zone not finally partitioned until 1899. Meanwhile on 24 December 1885 France recognized German rights to Little Popo and Porto Seguro, while securing Aghwey and Great Popo for herself.⁹

9. *Porto Novo and Lagos*. After the British annexation of Lagos France assumed a protectorate over the neighbouring state of Porto Novo by a treaty of 25 February 1863. A provisional boundary agreement with Lagos was negotiated locally on 1 August 1863, and was deemed to remain in force after the French were obliged to withdraw their protectorate in December 1864. During the later 1870s some Lagos officials, hoping eventually to establish fiscal control over the coastline dividing 'the two portions of Gold Coast Colony', began to encroach on territories claimed by Porto Novo, notably Ketenou. Tofa, ruler of Porto Novo since 1874, sought French support for his territorial and dynastic claims, and secured a renewal of the French protectorate

⁶ Hertslet, *Map of Africa*, vol. 3, pp. 1132-3; Hargreaves, *Prelude*, pp. 240-3.

⁷ Hertslet, *Map of Africa*, vol. 2, p. 745, vol. 3, pp. 1133-5; Hargreaves, *West Africa Partitioned*, vol. 2, pp. 51-60.

⁸ Hertslet, *Map of Africa*, vol. 2, p. 730; Hargreaves, *Prelude*, pp. 237-9, 288.

⁹ Hertslet, *Map of Africa*, vol. 2, pp. 654-6, vol. 3, pp. 890-9; Hargreaves, *Prelude*, pp. 239-40, 324-8.

on 2 April 1883. This led not only to sharp local conflicts but to intensified Anglo-French rivalry along the whole African coast. After much friction the comprehensive Anglo-French Agreement of 10 August 1889 defined a somewhat arbitrary boundary as far north as the ninth parallel.

Meanwhile French traders had persuaded their government to establish another base at Cotonou, in the kingdom of Dahomey, sowing more seeds for their eventual conflict with that state. In 1885 the Portuguese government claimed to have secured a protectorate over Dahomey; this groundless claim was withdrawn in December 1887, but a small garrison remained in the Portuguese fort at Whydah until 1961.¹⁰

10. *Nigeria-Cameroon*. Nachtigal's protectorate over the Duala in July 1884 forestalled the conclusion of British treaties; but nevertheless the two governments reached agreement between 29 April and 16 June 1885 on a division based on the line of the 'Rio del Rey'. Britain retained rights over the Mission settlement at Victoria, Amba Bay, until December 1887. This line was extended in 1886, redefined in 1890 when the Rio del Rey was discovered not to exist, and further extended in November 1893. Implicit in the 1885 agreement was the abandonment of claims asserted by Nachtigal at Mahin beach, near Benin.¹¹

11. *Cameroon-Gabon*. A Franco-German demarcation was agreed on 24 December 1885 along the line of the Rio Campo, and subsequently extended in February 1894.¹²

12. *Rio Muni*. Spanish claims to the north of Gabon, and to the island of Corisco and Eloby, had been under discussion with France for some time, and in 1886 a Joint Commission was appointed to resolve this dispute. No agreement has however concluded until 27 June 1900, when a convention also regulated the boundary of Spain's protectorate on the Saharan coast, notified to the powers on 9 January 1885.¹³

13. *Congo-Angola*. The boundary between the French possessions and the Portuguese enclave of Cabinda was defined in the Franco-Portuguese Convention of 12 May 1886.¹⁴

14. *The boundaries of the Congo Free State*. Here only was the progress of territorial delimitation closely related to the proceedings of the Conference itself.¹⁵ The flag of Leopold's International Association was recognized by the USA on 22 April 1884,¹⁶ and by France the next day (implicitly, by accepting the right of pre-emption which Leopold offered).¹⁷ Germany formally recognized the flag of the Association only on 8 November, and Britain on 16 December 1884; but both then worked to fortify its claims in order to avoid the greater evil of French control. While the Conference was imposing international regulation over the wider Conventional Basin of the Congo, Germany and Britain were encouraging the definition of the Free State's territorial base. By withdrawing his claim to Niari-Kwilu (France's favoured route from the coast to Brazzaville) Leopold secured a convention with France on 5 February 1885 which defined a frontier as far as 17° east.¹⁸ On 14 February Portugal, under German pressure, also accepted a convention, defining boundaries north and south of the

¹⁰ Hertslet, *Map of Africa*, vol. 2, pp. 732-3; Hargreaves, *Prelude*, pp. 110-18, 207-13, 294-300; Hargreaves, *West Africa Partitioned*, vol. 1, pp. 141-55, 241-46.

¹¹ Hertslet, *Map of Africa*, vol. 3, pp. 868-74, 880-1, 903, 913-5; Hargreaves, *Prelude*, pp. 321-3.

¹² Hertslet, *Map of Africa*, vol. 2, pp. 653, 657-9.

¹³ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 1163-6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 675.

¹⁵ The following account summarizes chapters 8 (Book I) and 5 (Book II) of S. E. Crow, *The Berlin West African Conference 1884-1885*, London 1942.

¹⁶ Hertslet, *Map of Africa*, vol. 2, pp. 602-4.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 562-3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 564-5.

Congo mouth which left the Free State with access to the ocean.¹⁹ On 1 August 1885 van Eetvelde, on behalf of the Congo Free State, issued a Circular, unilaterally outlining the territorial claims of the State as far as Lake Tanganyika.²⁰ By utilizing the mutual suspicions of stronger powers, and by appearing to accept the international obligations imposed by the Conference, Leopold was thus able to secure recognition, provisionally at least, for extremely wide territorial claims.

III

This summary shows that the demarcation of territorial responsibility on the west coast of Africa was a gradual process, in which the British, French, Portuguese, and Liberian governments began to engage more intensively from about 1879. In general their intention was to ensure continued commercial access while assuming the right to raise revenue from customs duties (*Zollhoheit*), not to exercise control over African populations; but as disputes developed national prestige became a factor affecting official attitudes. The 'scramble' (competition for political advantages between European agents in Africa) and the 'partition' (conclusion of diplomatic agreements allocating territorial claims between European governments) proceeded symbiotically. Disputes between Britons, Frenchmen, and their African associates in the Mellacourie-Scarcies region were regulated by the abortive Anglo-French Convention of 28 June 1882, but misunderstanding of the implications of this document helped to induce Bismarck to authorize Nachtigal's participation in the scramble.²¹ This entry of Germany into the African political arena greatly complicated the lives of French and British officials, as well as of Africans, but had the immediate effect of stimulating the bilateral partition negotiations noted above.

By 1886 the coastal limits of the new German colonies had all been defined, and longer-standing disputes involving the weaker participants, Liberia and Portuguese Guinea, had also been settled. But there was more difficulty in fixing boundaries like those of Porto Novo or the eastern Ivory Coast, where Anglo-French commercial rivalries had over the years become closely intertwined with local inter-African relationships. Only in the case of French claims on the western Ivory Coast was the Berlin 'Declaration relative to the essential conditions to be observed in order that new occupations on the Coasts of the African Continent may be held to be effective' applied in this region. And only in the exceptional case of the Congo Free State was there any significant interaction between the work of the Conference and the territorial settlement.

In West Africa the Berlin Act thus provided European governments with a procedure for legitimizing and regulating a process of encroachment upon African autonomy which had long been under way. (Liberia, a non-European state of ambiguous international standing, was excluded from the opportunity to register her

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 591-2.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 552-4.

²¹ Hargreaves, *Prelude*, ch. 5; H. P. Jaeck, 'Die deutsche Annexion', in H. Stoecker (ed.), *Kamerun unter deutscher Kolonialherrschaft*, 2 vols., Berlin 1960-8, vol. 1,

pp. 52-78; H. A. Turner, 'Bismarck's Imperialist Venture: Anti-British in Origin?', in P. Gifford and R. Louis (eds.), *Britain and Germany in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule*, New Haven, Conn. 1967, pp. 53-77.

existing claims on the Kru coast). But the definition of inland boundaries, which the delegates perceived 'would lead in fact to a partition of Africa,'²² was, except in Senegambia, to be the work of the 1890s. Although a few imperial theorists and technocrats may have dreamed, like Ibsen's Peer Gynt, of a territorial partition of the African continent, Leopold II was the only participant at Berlin to have formulated any such design. Great Britain's deal was still as formulated in Article 12 of the Versailles Treaty of 1783, that on the coasts beyond Senegambia 'English and French subjects shall continue to resort thereto, according to the usage which has hitherto prevailed.'²³ But while pursuing her free-trading objectives Britain had extended her coastal possessions; to meet the cost of administering them she imposed customs duties; it was largely to avoid submission to such a regime that the French and later the Germans developed their own political claims. Disputes over fiscality were thus the primary cause of the scramble for coastline. But after 1885 it became increasingly clear that (as the French had long found in Senegal, and the British on the Gold Coast) the logic of African politics would create needs for military expeditions to support African clients or allies against rivals in the interior. And by the 1890s additional pressures, for railway construction or other measures to reduce commercial costs, helped persuade European governments to embark on the partition and conquest of the continent. Their objective was no longer merely commercial access, but control, including the power to levy taxes and direct labour. Moreover in negotiation they increasingly had to take account of organized pressure groups in their own societies, proclaiming that the size of their country's territorial empires in Africa had become an essential index of national prestige and power, whether or not the territories concerned could be shown to have immediate commercial or strategic importance.

The imperial governments now needed to devise methods for apportioning large areas of inland territory, the topography and political geography of which were largely unknown to them. Diplomats were instinctively attracted to the idea of 'comprehensive dealing', which had underlain Anglo-French negotiations for an exchange of the Gambia in the 1870s. If Britain and France could agree on a partition line, wrote Percy Anderson in 1883, 'the African commercial policy of the two countries would . . . have separate fields, ample for both, in which there would be no collision and no petty rivalries'.²⁴ Various possible boundaries were on occasion boldly drawn across the negotiators' maps; but any such scheme was likely to affect some vested interest, and so create political embarrassment for the negotiators.

Failing a boldly comprehensive deal, detailed negotiations covering many hundreds of miles of boundaries would eventually be necessary. During the 1880s European governments increasingly adopted the method of approaching these through Joint Commissions: two medium-ranking bureaucrats from each of the governments involved (one usually representing colonial, the other diplomatic, interests) assembled round a table in Paris, London, or Berlin. But they still had to decide by what criteria to proceed.

Often negotiations began with the production of protectorate treaties, implying that the criterion of partition would be the consent of African authorities. It soon became

²² 8th Protocol, 31 Jan. 1885, see R. J. Gavin, J. A. Betley (eds.), *The Scramble for Africa: Documents on the Berlin West African Conference and Related Subjects, 1884/85*, Ibadan 1973, pp. 239-55.

²³ Hertslet, *Map of Africa*, vol. 2, p. 713.

²⁴ PRO: FO/84/1654, memo by H. P. Anderson, 11 June 1883.

clear that this would not solve the diplomats' problem, of resolving inter-European disputes. A few African rulers (such as Tofa) had indeed signed treaties with some deliberation as to their own interests—though of course without foreseeing the consequences which would follow in the 1890s, as Europeans reinterpreted their doctrine of protectorates to justify arbitrary exercises of power. But other signatories had clearly had no glimmering of the uses which would be made of the documents to which they appended their crosses; and some of the treaties produced seem to have been more or less deliberate fabrications or forgeries. The problems of verification, by the normal methods of European diplomacy, were clearly overwhelming; to attempt it would mean multiplying accusations of bad faith, and would greatly increase international acrimony. When at the eighth session of the Berlin Conference Kasson suggested 'a more extended rule, to be based on a principle which should aim at the voluntary consent of the natives whose country is taken possession of', Busch ruled from the chair that this 'touched on delicate questions, upon which the Conference hesitated to express an opinion.' Henceforth it was tacitly agreed among the colonial powers that the security of treaties with Africans should not be pushed too far.

So other criteria of apportionment had to be devised. Initially, many negotiators did have some general intention of following existing boundaries between African peoples or polities. But well-defined territorial sovereignty had not become a general rule in Africa, as it had in Europe. In 1889 the British Military Intelligence Department crudely simplified the problem of assigning firm boundaries to mobile populations in multi-ethnic areas: 'The tribes themselves have as a rule no idea of territorial limits, their locations are constantly changing, and there exist small tribes between the large ones which owe allegiance sometimes to the one and sometimes to the other.'²⁵

Rather than attempt to follow the boundaries of states whose rulers could not have described them accurately, it was often simpler to allocate territory along some topographical feature like a watershed or river. But apart from the fact that, as in the classic case of the Rio del Rey, it might prove difficult to locate these on the ground, such features often cut across established trade routes or cultural unities, providing local administrators with more problems than they solved. When it became a question of extending coastal borders into a largely unexplored hinterland, the safest course might be to use lines of latitude and longitude, or other geometrical constructions, which ought to prove capable of objective survey; from the point of view of minimizing inter-European conflicts, arbitrary lines were better than no lines.

But an arbitrary line drawn across a small map in Paris or London still had to be demarcated on the ground. The arduous task of trekking through the tropical bush with a foreign colleague to agree the sites of boundary markers usually fell to ambitious young patriots, often military officers trained in surveying, who regarded it as their duty not merely to define the national claims, but to extend them to the extreme limit compatible with the text they were supposed to be implementing. Further difficulties arose which had to be referred back to the metropolitan diplomats; and as imperialism became a popular cause during the 1890s, these became trials of political strength. The atmosphere in which France and Britain had finally to determine the boundaries of their empires on the Niger and the Nile was very far removed from the internationalism of Berlin.

²⁵ PRO: FO/84/1899, memo by Lake and Darwin, 16 July 1889.

CONCLUSION

Except for its provisions regarding the Congo (and to a lesser degree those concerning the Niger) the Berlin Conference does not seem to have had important direct effects on the process of territorial partition. It rather represents an attempt to prolong the nineteenth-century pattern of relations between Black Africa and the capitalist world, in which governments were more concerned to maintain some unity of European approach than to extend their national claims. Only in the 1890s did the interaction between social and political pressures in Europe and local crises in Africa provide conditions in which colonial conquest seemed justified or feasible.

Some critics may consider this chronological distinction of small importance: partition, it has been argued, was already 'inevitable'. That this word should always be used by historians with great caution is confirmed by comparing Africa in the 1880s with China in the 1890s, where many observers also prophesied imminent territorial partition. There too, where the pressures of foreign capital were considerably more powerful, there were cessions of territorial toe-holds, extra-territorial privileges in 'treaty ports', international agreements over future spheres of influence. But there was a profound difference; in China the foreign invaders were seeking concessions from a central authority, though apparently a decrepit one, not from a multitude of more or less minor principalities with conflicting and competing interests. In China, the 'dying nation' eventually proved capable of spectacular self-rejuvenation, after successive revolutionary upheavels and foreign wars. But despite the efforts which many states were making towards self-modernization, there was no such possibility in Africa. If the invaders were to consolidate their claims on the coasts, resolve the internal conflicts which their presence had sharpened, and provide a political framework to protect new investments, they would have to create new political structures. The outlines of these would eventually be inscribed on the map of partitioned Africa; but they were still largely invisible to the delegates at Berlin.

The Berlin Conference and the Humanitarian Conscience

L. H. GANN

Controversy concerning empire is as ancient as the empires themselves. How splendid are the works of the Romans! Thus pleaded Rabbi Judah some two millenia ago. They have made roads; they have constructed bridges; they have erected baths, and they have created markets. And so they have, replied Rabbi Simeon Bar Yohai; but all they wrought they did for themselves. They have built roads for their soldiers, bridges to levy tolls, baths for their delight, and markets to set up their whores.¹

Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writers have overwhelmingly sided with Rabbi Judah in the colonial debate; it was not for nothing that the age of imperialism was also a great era of Latin scholarship, and that many European empire builders were schooled in the classics. During the subsequent era of colonization, scholars and journalists revised long-standing assumptions. Unwittingly in agreement with Rabbi Simeon Bar Yohai, they concentrated on the mercenary and self-serving elements in colonialism—so much that the very term itself has become almost a synonym for exploitation. And with good reason, a historian who ponders over the Berlin Conference will find much evidence for the proposition put forward by Marxist scholars such as Heinrich Loth that humanitarian rhetoric employed at the time merely served as a mask to justify the most brutal form of self-interest.²

In the first place, Africans, the supposed beneficiaries of the Conference, had no share in its proceedings. As Sir Edward Malet, the British Ambassador in Berlin at the time put it, 'I cannot forget that the natives are not represented amongst us, and that the decisions of the Conference will, nevertheless, have extreme importance for them.'³ Admittedly, the powers could not have been expected to invite representatives from the innumerable array of preliterate kings, warlords, and clan heads who ruled most of Africa at the time. Even the sovereigns of more advanced states with indigenous literary civilizations such as Zanzibar and Ethiopia, could hardly have been expected to participate. The European representatives might, however, at least have drawn on the advice of Westernized Africans, solid Afro-Victorians such as Africanus Horton, a West African soldier, physician, and scientist, whose counsel would have been of great value. But the Africans' welfare was considered only in a secondary

¹ Cited by B. Fetter, *Colonial Rule and Regional Imbalance in Central Africa*, Boulder, Colo. 1943, p. 1, citing H. H. Freedman, Hebrew-English Edition of the *Babylonian Talmud Shabbath*, 2 vols., London 1972, vol. 1, p. 336.

² H. Loth, *Kolonialismus und 'Humanitätsintervention'*, Berlin 1966, *passim*.

³ Declaration by Malet, 15 Nov. 1884, reprinted in R. J. Gavin and J. A. Betley (eds.), *The Scramble for Africa: Documents on the Berlin West African Conference and Related Subjects 1884-1885*, Ibadan 1973, p. 131. For an assessment of Horton's pro-imperial views, see C. Fyfe, *Africanus Horton: West African Scientist and Patriot*, New York 1972.

sense; the Conference concentrated on political, commercial, and judicial questions and lacked a specifically philanthropic agenda.⁴

This is hardly surprising, for Bismarck, the Conference's convenor, quite specifically was only willing to consider humanitarian questions in so far as freedom of trade and transit was concerned. In this respect, the German Chancellor was in no way unique; the negotiators were concerned above all to secure commercial and diplomatic benefits for their own respective countries, as well as advantages for their respective governments in domestic politics.

In the end, the Conference attained but few of its declared objectives. The Conference helped to set up the so-called Congo Free State under the suzerainty of Leopold II; the powers legitimized a regime that later made itself infamous by its monopolistic practices and by its 'red rubber' atrocities (occasioned by the manner in which wild rubber was extorted through compulsory labour from Africans in the most brutal fashion). Politically, the Conference only assisted in consolidating in Central Africa the personal power to Leopold II, a king whom Cecil Rhodes, not a squeamish man, described after meeting the monarch as a very Satan.⁵

Under his rule, the provisions of the General Act of the Conference, arrived at in 1885, were brutally ignored; there was liberty neither of labour, trade, nor conscience. As late as 1918, after an extended period of reform, delegates at the General Conference of Protestant Missions in the Congo asserted that liberty of religion left much to be desired, that the Catholic missions and government had become as one, and that the key provisions of the Berlin Act and even of the colony's Penal Code had been reduced to 'mere scraps of paper'.⁶

Nevertheless, the Conference at the time commanded almost universal assent both in Europe and in North America. The Conference had the support of missionaries and intellectuals who helped to prepare the way for the congress to be held. (Gerhard Rohlfs thus had suggested in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* that the Congo would be neutralized under international auspices; Emile de Laveleye assented in the *Revue de droit international*, as did a variety of academic institutions.) The Conference at least managed to avoid international conflict over a contentious territorial dispute of far-reaching importance. The Conference for a time evidenced an international comity of nations that embraced not only the European powers, but also the Ottoman Empire and the United States. The Conference took its place in a whole series of international meetings and agreements whose numbers had increased rapidly from 1870 onward; between them they created an extensive network of inter-state organizations and treaties matching the separate national ambitions of each state with a new kind of technical and legal internationalism.⁷

The Conference moreover represented certain underlying assumptions, incongruously shared by men as unlike as Livingstone and Marx. Both believed—for different reasons—that European colonialism represented a progressive force in what

⁴ G. König, *Die Berliner Kongo-Konferenz 1884-1885: Ein Beitrag zur Kolonialpolitik Bismarcks*, Essen 1938, p. 162.

⁵ B. Williams, *Cecil Rhodes*, London 1938, p. 310. For an analysis of the Congolese administration, see L. H. Gann and P. Duignan, *The Rulers of Belgian Africa, 1884-1914*, Princeton 1979, specially pp. 116-40.

⁶ M. D. Markowitz, *Cross and Sword: The Political Role of Christian Missions in the Belgian Congo, 1908-1960*, Stanford 1973, p. 10.

⁷ T. Schieder, 'Political and Social Developments in Europe', in *The New Cambridge Modern History*, 14 vols., Cambridge 1957-70, vol. 11, ed. by F. H. Hinsley; *Material Progress and Worldwide Problems, 1870-1898*, Cambridge 1962, pp. 243-74, p. 253.

today is called the 'Third World'. Both stood for what might be called steam-power optimism. Livingstone spoke for most Protestant and many of the Catholic missionaries. Livingstone not only had played a major part in familiarizing the West with still largely unknown regions in Central Africa. He was a pioneer of tropical medicine at a time when little was known of tropical diseases. (For instance, he helped to elucidate the value of quinine for prophylactic purposes against malaria, and he was the first to link relapsing fever to ticks.⁸) Livingstone felt convinced that Africa was not destined to remain, as hitherto, a 'white man's grave'.

Livingstone linked his medical work to a wider theory of African development, one shared by most of the scientific, missionary, and philanthropic pressure groups of the time—the *Société de Géographie de France*, the Aborigines' Protection Society in Britain, *Centralverein für Handelsgeographie* and the *Gesellschaft für Eingeborenenschutz* in Germany, and (in Belgium) the International Association for the Exploration and Civilization of Central Africa founded originally for scientific and humanitarian objects, but later developed into an instrument for Leopold's private empire building in Africa.

Europe, Livingstone argued in a curiously modern strain, must bring the gospel to Africa, but sermons alone would not suffice. The new religion would not strike roots unless accompanied by a major social and economic revolution. Trade must follow the gospel; 'legitimate' commerce in tropical raw materials should replace the traffic in human beings that was depopulating the continent and keeping Africans in misery. Steam power, Livingstone hoped, would one day throw the way open into the African interior, thus doing away with the need for native porters and making possible the cultivation of cash crops like cotton, of which Britain was growing desperately short during the 'cotton-famine' occasioned by the American Civil War. In return for its primary products, Africa would import manufactured goods from Europe, not just gunpowder and 'Tower Muskets', so that White and Black alike would benefit from a new economic partnership. Development, however, needed pioneers, and Livingstone keenly favoured the cause of European settlement in Central Africa, hoping that white colonists would teach new techniques of production to the indigenous peoples.

Karl Marx, in certain respects, shared Livingstone's mind set. Pondering over the effects of British imperialism in India, he had argued that the British were actuated by the vilest self-interest. But the British did bring about a social revolution on the sub-continent; whatever their crimes, the colonizers were a tool of history. Nothing would be more mistaken than to idealize the pre-colonial societies of India, contaminated as they were by distinctions of 'caste and slavery', apt to subjugate 'man to external circumstances instead of elevating man to be the sovereign of circumstances'.⁹ The British had, for the first time, begun to regenerate a backward land by establishing political unity, by constructing telegraph lines, building a modern army, setting up a free press, and consolidating new forms of private property in land. The British had brought into being an educated Indian class; moreover they had provided India with railways and initiated regular and rapid communications with Europe through steamship services. By doing so, the British would facilitate the growth of modern

⁸ See M. Gelfand, *Livingstone the Doctor, his Life and Travels: A Study in Medical History*, Oxford 1957.

⁹ K. Marx, 'The British Rule in India' [10 June 1853]

reprinted in K. Marx and F. Engels, *On Colonialism: Articles from the New York Tribune and Other Writings*, New York 1972, p. 41.

industry in India, thereby ultimately enabling Indians to break the foreign yoke, and initiate a happier future for the subcontinent.¹⁰ Both Livingstone and Marx, just as Kipling, thus agreed that—in the short run at least—Western colonial rule, material development, and humanitarian endeavour would go hand in hand.

The most salient issue in the humanitarians' mind was the slave trade. As Lord Granville, the British Foreign Secretary at the time, put it, there was an urgent need to exert all energies 'for the amelioration of the native races by suppressing the export of slaves'.¹¹ The slave trade, argued a Commission Report made for the Conference, stood for 'the very denial of every law, of all social order'. 'Man-hunting constitutes a crime of high treason against humanity.'¹² The reasons were clear; as Livingstone had put it two decades earlier, the trade would prove 'an insurmountable barrier to all moral and commercial progress'.¹³ From the Europeans' standpoint, a modern cash economy would not flourish as long as potential customers were abducted or slain, or as long as potential wage-workers on mines and plantations were led to captivity in Muslim plantations. As a British police officer in Northern Rhodesia put the matter succinctly, the traffic was not only inhuman, but was also to be condemned for occasioning an 'iniquitous abduction of valuable labour'.¹⁴

The realities of the slave trade of course were more complex. Many indigenous African communities were familiar with personal bondage in a variety of forms. Men and women might be kidnapped in wars, convicted for crimes, transferred by their respective clans in payment for debt, or might even voluntarily put themselves in the hands of some local magnate. The bondsman's or bondswoman's treatment varied a great deal; some were treated almost as family members; others might experience the most miserable fate.

Much more extensive was the traffic carried on by Swahili-speaking Muslims (often mistakenly referred to as 'Arabs' in the contemporary literature). The Swahili spread inland from the east coast, led by local warlords. They were well supplied with firearms. But for Belgian intervention, these Swahili conquerors would have secured a major part of the Congo. Their economy in part depended on the traffic in captives and ivory. As elephants were 'shot out' in one particular region, Muslim warlords pushed further into the interior. They strengthened their commerce by imposing their own political power, often using indigenous chiefs as intermediaries. Political control over a particular region would yield indirect benefits by enabling the new rulers to levy tolls, tributes, and other imposts. The Muslim system of dispersed and decentralized governance thus rested on continuous expansion.

The effects were two-sided. Commerce to the east coast supplied Africans with new merchandise; in some cases Swahili settlers introduced new crops. They also brought new skills. (Some even came as smiths or tailors to work for local Africans.) These

¹⁰ K. Marx, 'The Future Results of the British Rule in India' [22 July 1853], Marx and Engels, *Colonialism*, pp. 81-7.

¹¹ Granville to Malet: 17 Oct. 1884, Gavin and Betley, *Scramble for Africa*, p. 54.

¹² Report made in the name of the Commission charged with examining the project of Declaration relating to the freedom of commerce in the Basin of the Congo and its effluents, in Gavin and Betley, *Scramble for*

Africa, p. 72.

¹³ D. Livingstone, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambezi and its Tributaries*, London 1865, p. 595.

¹⁴ Col. Harding Report, 4 May 1901, British South Africa Company Minutes of 8 May 1901, aux. 1, cited in L. H. Gann, 'The End of the Slave Trade in British Central Africa, 1889-1912', *Rhodes-Livingstone Journal*, 16 (1954), pp. 25-53, p. 41.

advantages, however, were paid for at a high price. The traffic occasioned enormous bloodshed, as the 'gunpower frontier' spread inland, as local black lords became involved in the traffic, as raiding expeditions devastated entire villages, and as untold numbers of victims perished in internecine conflicts, or died on the long and dreadful march to the coast in what was Africa's first form of labour migration.

For ill or good, the slave trade, however, formed an essential part of the Swahili economy by supplying manpower to plantations (such as the clove plantations in Zanzibar) and for the Muslim magnates' households. The traffic also stood for an attitude toward African labourers very different from that of European employers. The slaves might suffer terribly as long as they moved in caravans to the slave markets. But once the captive had arrived at his destination, he usually led a 'fairly easy life'. The Arab or half-caste plantation owner did not stand over him with his watch in his hand, checking results. The Muslim had no watch. He had no production schedule. The European was different. Sir Harry Johnston, the first British Commissioner for Central Africa, a very acute observer, was even convinced that it was preferable for the slave to remain with his old owner rather than be liberated and be put in charge of a Christian mission. The Arab's 'tolerable form of servitude' was more agreeable than 'the tutelage of a Christian mission, with its regular hours of work, its plain diet, severe chastity and absence of exhilarating orgies', as far as the slave was concerned.¹⁵

Again, the two civilizations differed in their attitude towards assimilating the African. In most cases the European believed in the segregation of the African labourer. The Arab, on the other hand, believed in assimilation. He took black wives. He practiced polygamy like the African. Besides, Muslim slavery was not a rigidly fixed status, but one allowing for an infinite number of gradations from misery to wealth. As one observer put it, 'that gaily dressed man with riches of cloth for exchange is a slave, and that poor woman who has brought her basket of meal into the market to sell looks upon him in awe and envy with her companion who carries her ware and who is her slave.' The slave trade stood indeed for 'a rival kind of civilization to that of the white man which it is of a much easier notion for the Negro mind to accept'.¹⁶ One of the two had to go, for between the two 'peaceful coexistence' was impossible.

The General Act of the Conference of Berlin thus specifically outlawed the slave trade 'in conformity with the principles of international law', embodied as it had been in a long series of agreements since the Congress of Vienna. Article 9 obligated the signatories to prevent the territories forming the conventional basin of the Congo from being used 'as a market or means of transit for the trade in slaves'. Each power promised 'to employ all means at its disposal for putting an end to the traffic and punishing those engaged in it'. By implication Article 9 constituted a declaration of war against the Swahili-speaking Muslims and their civilization, based as it was on commerce conducted on the backs of human carriers, on local handicrafts, and on plantations operated through servile or semi-servile labour.¹⁷

Initially, the General Act was more honoured in the breach than the observance. The Congo Free State at first in fact co-operated with magnates such as Tipu Tib and

¹⁵ Johnston, FO 18 July 1891 (FO Print 6178/1891, printed documents for the use of the Foreign Office).

¹⁶ E. C. Hore, *Tanganyika: Eleven Years in Central Africa*, London 1892, p. 73.

¹⁷ General Act of the Conference of Berlin, 26 Feb. 1885, reprinted in A. B. Keith, *The Belgian Congo and the Berlin Act*, London 1919, pp. 302-16.

other Swahili-speaking chieftains. But as the Free State strengthened its military forces, the Belgians—during the 1890s—took up arms against the Arabs. The campaigns waged by the Free State against the Muslim power stretched from the east coast to the Far Interior. By doing so, the new colonial rulers by no means did away with compulsory labour. The creation of a true wage economy could not come about until railways, and later motor trucks, had come to replace human portage, until shops and stores had spread into remote villages, until roads had penetrated into the interior, until deep-level mining plantations, railways, and workshops had created employment of a new kind. The initial response of the new governments at the end of the nineteenth century was at first ambivalent. The colonial rulers initially lacked the men, the means, and even the will to wipe out slavery. In many instances, the new overlords in fact made use of traditional institutions. Some of the early colonial forces might in some ways be described as traditional slave armies under new management. The imperial impact on slavery was, on the whole, more indirect than direct. Mission stations provided sanctuaries for liberated or runaway slaves. African catechists in the service of mission societies acted as propagandists of liberation. So did African soldiers who had enlisted in the colonial armies and thereby played a major part in the colonization of Africa by the European powers.

Above all, there was strong pressure from the slaves themselves. Romantic interpretations concerning bondage in pre-colonial Africa notwithstanding, the overwhelming majority of slaves desperately wanted freedom. The imposition of imperial rule thus led to widespread flight of slaves from their masters. Slaves wanted control over their own persons, their own earnings, and their own property. The consolidation of imperial rule thus entailed a social revolution. The destruction of the slave trade in the end formed an essential step in the process of modernization; in this respect the anti-slavery provisions of the Berlin Conference pointed the way to the future.

'Legitimate trade' played an even greater part on the Conference agenda than the traffic in slaves. During the second part of the nineteenth century, products from the African forest belt began to assume increasing importance in the world economy, as manufacturing industries created new demands for tropical products such as palm oil, palm kernels, and rubber. Commerce further benefited from the gradual replacement of the sailing ship by the steam-powered vessel. However, from the 1870s to the 1890s, this promising trade suffered from a worldwide depression. This slump in turn intensified competition, both between Europeans in West and Central Africa, and also—in many cases—between Europeans and Africans. White merchants became increasingly disposed to lower their costs by eliminating African middlemen, by getting rid of tolls and customary tribute that impeded inland trade, and by directly dealing with communities of the interior. As the Committee of the British Cotton Spinners' Association put it, 'the insecurity and lawlessness which from time to time prevails in the Lower Congo region' should give way to the rule of a European power that would promote order and further trade by eliminating 'the weak, unstable, and partial control of native Chiefs'.¹⁸ This policy represented a striking departure from past

¹⁸ Enclosure in Guthrie to Granville 25 Mar. 1884, Gavin and Betley, *Scramble for Africa*, p. 16. For a recent appraisal of the role of trade and the slave trade, see E.

Lovejoy, *Transformation in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*, Cambridge 1983.

practices. As long as European merchants confined their operations to the coast, the whites had usually lived on good terms with local African magnates along the coast. Now there was a new demand for European political intervention exercised, if necessary, through punitive expeditions and gunboats.¹⁹

How was this commerce to be apportioned? Great Britain, the world's chief naval power and the most powerful colonizing power in Africa, stood firmly for free trade. In the eyes of its advocates, free trade represented the cause of humanity, for unfettered competition would facilitate peaceful competition between nations, instead of war. Free trade would also benefit Great Britain in material terms at a time when 'Manchester furnishes the clothes, Birmingham the iron and brass wares, Yorkshire the woollens, London the boats and means of navigation, and Liverpool and London the provisions.' This commerce was 'only in its infancy', moreover, and certain to expand.²⁰ The Germans, in particular anxious to protect a substantial trade in gin, rum, and other spirits, equally supported free trade. So did the US, convinced as always of the merits of the 'Open Door'. As Dr Duignan points out in this volume, the US representative, John A. Kasson, American minister at Berlin at the time, played a particularly important part during the Conference, as he was advised by experts such as Henry Morton Stanley, the explorer, and was more familiar with the problems of the region than most other delegates. To the Americans, as to the British, it seemed certain that the blacks would learn from Leopold's rule that 'the civilization and the dominion of the white man means for them [the Africans] peace and freedom and the development of useful commerce, free to all the world'.²¹ Article 1 of the General Act therefore specified that 'the trade of all nations shall enjoy complete freedom' in the basin of the Congo. According to Article 2, 'all flags, without distinction of nationality, shall have free access' to the coast line, the rivers, and all waters of the Congo and its tributaries. Article 3 laid down that imported waters should be 'subject to no other taxes than such as may be levied as fair compensation for expenditure in the interests of trade'. Trade monopolies of any kind, said Article 3, should be strictly outlawed.

European and American policy-makers, however, operated on mistaken assumptions. Free trade, as they understood it, automatically stood for peaceful competition. But set within an African context free trade implied not peace, but a declaration of war against indigenous chieftainships, against local policies that depended for their revenue on a variety of tolls, duties, and tributes. To Westerners, all these formed 'restraints on trade', to African rulers an essential part of their suzerainty.

In extolling the virtues of free trade, European politicians and company promoters were apt to make serious miscalculations. They vastly overestimated both the profits that could be made in the interior, and the ease with which its potential wealth could be extracted. Supposedly, a 'vast market' lay 'open in the very heart of Africa'.²² But colonial enthusiasts invariably failed to appreciate the enormous cost of creating a

¹⁹ For a detailed analysis see A. G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of the West*, London 1973, specially pp. 124-66.

²⁰ Cited from enclosure: Congo Treaty, 5 Mar. 1884, in Hutton to Fitzmaurice 6 Mar. 1884, Gavin and Betley, *Scramble for Africa*, p. 12.

²¹ US Senate: 'Report of the Secretary of State Relative to the Affairs of the Independent State of the

Congo', Senate Executive Documents, 49th Congress, 1st Session, 1886, no. 196, p. 34, cited in P. Duignan and L. H. Gann, *The United States and Africa: A History*, Cambridge 1984, p. 134.

²² Report of the Commission Charged to Examine the Projects of Acts of Navigation for the Congo and the Niger, Gavin and Betley, *Scramble for Africa*, p. 204.

logistic infrastructure, of setting health and other technical services, and of establishing a modern administration. They had little idea of the enormous amounts of capital that would be required, the risks that lay ahead, and the great sums of money that would be lost, before profits could be earned on a massive scale. (In this respect there was a striking, though unintended correspondence between the promises made by late-Victorian company promoters to their share holders, and humanitarian and socialist critiques concerning the 'superprofits' that were supposedly being earned at the time with tropical Africa.)

Such unrealistic expectations caused empire-builders such as Bismarck, Leopold II, Cecil Rhodes, Sir George Goldie, and their kind to imagine at the time that colonization could be undertaken through chartered, semi-private companies whose intervention would shield the metropolitan taxpayer from assuming the true costs of colonialism; they believed at first that commerce would yield sufficient revenue to finance colonialism on the cheap. These assumptions proved to be mistaken. The Congo Free State, vainly attempting to finance its operations from the proceeds of local trade, departed from the principles established by the original planners. For a time, the state turned to *Raubwirtschaft*, based on an exploitative system of monopolies. In the end, the Congo Free State had to be taken over by Belgium and reformed, just as the Royal Niger Company—having resorted to monopolistic practices not sanctioned by its charter—had to yield political rule on the Niger to British imperial administration.

The negotiators at the Conference were equally ineffective moreover in imposing 'humanitarian' restrictions on trade. They were concerned, for instance over the African traffic in firearms, widely considered 'a pernicious influence' in promoting both the slave trade and internecine African wars. The arms trade was indeed on the increase, as low-quality weapons and also small arms discarded by European armies found new customers in the African interior. (By the 1890's, for instance, the Bemba people in North Eastern Rhodesia were well supplied with British 'Tower' muskets that had once done duty at Waterloo.) Firearms were being bought not only for warlike purposes, but also as prestige symbols, for hunting, and as a means of capital investment. Firearms in Muslim or African hands, of course, also made the European conqueror's task harder; but the traffic was hard to control—given its dispersed nature and the vastness of the regions involved. A subsequent conference at Brussels in 1890 laid down a number of restrictions on the arms traffic; but these proved to little avail. There was a new agreement concluded in 1908, and a subsequent declaration in 1910;²³ but the partial disarmament of indigenous Africans owed more to the consolidation of European rule on the spot than to international agreements.

Another humanitarian concern, dear especially to missionaries, concerned the importation of liquor. According to Sir Percy Anderson, a senior British representative, 'it would be a disaster for the humane cause and a reproach to all civilized nations if the result of contact with foreign commerce should give birth to a passion amongst the natives which would demoralize and degrade them.'²⁴ European prejudices notwithstanding, Africans, however, did not turn to massive drunkenness;

²³ See British Parliamentary Command Papers Cd. 6802 of 1908, Cd. 6037 of 1910.

Mr. Anderson in the Discussion of Spirituous Liquors', Gavin and Betley, *Scramble for Africa*, p. 223.

²⁴ Annex no. 16 to Protocol no. 5. 'Observations by

being expert beer brewers, they did not necessarily rely on European imports when they chose to celebrate. In traditional societies, moreover, imported spirits, as often as not, served as a trade currency as much as a means of temperance at the Conference. The British broached the question, but the Conference did not pursue the matter, owing in part to opposition from the Dutch, and equally so from the Germans, three-fifths of whose exports from Hamburg to West Africa consisted of liquor.²⁵ Subsequent agreements, including a convention concluded by the powers with respect to the traffic in spirits signed at Brussels in 1906, imposed certain restrictions; but again it was the European colonial administrations on the spot that determined policy to the best of their limited ability.

The Conference was no more successful in attempts to neutralize the Congo basin. Neutrality was a cause dear to those who believed in freedom of trade and those who held that commerce would contribute both to peace and the spread of civilization. Moreover, the predominant position of Belgium, herself a neutral power, lent special force to the argument for conferring a similar status on the territory which the Belgian monarch would rule. Articles 10 to 12 of the General Act, by the use of evasive language, merely imposed on the signatories the duty of observing the neutrality of any of the territories embraced under the Act, if the power exercising sovereign rights in these regions declared them neutral, and if this power itself observed the rules of neutrality. By a rather bizarre application of the neutrality doctrine, the waters of the Congo, its tributaries, as well as the roads and railways linking them, were to be open to all nations—neutral and belligerent—even at time of war, with the solitary exception of contraband traffic. None of these paper provisions survived World War I, when colonial Africa as a whole became involved in the Europeans' world-wide struggle.

The humanitarian intentions of the Berlin Conference thus remained largely on paper. Nevertheless, the Conference was not wholly ineffectual. The negotiators, as we have seen, managed to adjust their differences peacefully. The 'scramble for Africa' did not—at least—involve war between the European participants. The Conference also made some attempt to consolidate an imperial ethic. In this respect, the Conference wrote a new chapter in the history of empire building. Throughout the ages, conquerors had gloried in their victories. 'And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life,'²⁶ proudly wrote the biblical chronicler. Zulu praise singers and *griots* (bards) from Sine-Saloum composed poems in a similar vein. The new rulers differed from previous empire builders in Africa in that they not only brought to the continent entirely new systems of production, science, and technology, but in that they attempted—at least in theory—to justify their rule on the grounds that imperial governance would enhance their subjects' material condition.

In this respect, the General Act was quite specific. Article 6 bound the powers 'to watch over the preservation of the native tribes, and to care for their moral and material well-being'. They would 'without distinction of creed and nation, protect and favour all religious, scientific or charitable institutions, and undertakings created for

²⁵ Consul-General Annesley to Granville, 20 Oct. 1884, in Great Britain, Foreign Office. *Correspondence Respecting the Proposed West African Conference*, May to Oct.

1884, Confidential Print, pp. 62-3.

²⁶ 1 Kings 4: 21.

the above ends, or which aimed at instructing the natives and bringing them home to the blessings of civilization'. Freedom of conscience was guaranteed to all; so was 'the free and public exercise of all forms of Divine worship' and 'the right to build public edifices for religious purposes, and to organize religious Missions belonging to all creeds'. (This latter formulation formed a concession to the Ottoman representative who insisted that religious liberties should not be confined to Christian missions alone.²⁷)

Many barrels of ink have since been expended over the question of how far these objects were achieved. Modern interpretations differ all the way, from Walter Rodney's thesis of *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* to the contrary case put forward by Peter Duignan and myself in *Burden of Empire*.²⁸ Certainly, the Berlin Conference laid down no machinery for enforcing the principles it had proclaimed. And even the most passionate of defenders of empire admitted that such humanitarian precepts were widely violated. The initial period of colonization in particular witnessed military conquest, sometimes of the most brutal kind. There was recourse to *Raubwirtschaft*, to direct appropriation of land and labour. Widespread reforms in Europe's African possessions had to wait until the first decade of the present century, when the colonizers began to speak in terms of a 'dual mandate' or 'trusteeship', of *Eingeborenenfürsorge*, *moralisation*, or *política de atracão*. These terms all implied policies of a kind congruent with the Berlin Act's humanitarian provisions. Reformers began to look upon the indigenous Africans as 'economic men', capable of responding to market incentives, rather than to economic coercion. Advocates of the new course, colonial statesmen such as Bernhard Dernburg in Germany, Joseph Chamberlain in Great Britain, Louis Franck in Belgium, or José Norton de Matos in Portugal looked to colonialism of a 'scientific' kind, designed to further capitalist enterprise in the colonies through administrative reforms, the employment of highly qualified specialists, and the application of science toward economic improvement. 'Development' for them and their followers turned into a new secular gospel.

The Berlin Conference helped to set up a new international opinion and a new international standard whereby the colonizers—at least in theory—judged themselves and their competitors. Having seized the German colonies during World War I, the Allies no longer disposed of their new possessions simply by right of conquest, but on the grounds that the Kaiser's Germany, more than any other power, had peculiarly offended against those accepted international standards laid down at the Berlin Conference and similar gatherings. The Allied charge, bitterly rejected by German nationalists as *die Kolonialschuldfrage* (the slander of colonial guilt), nevertheless stuck. Germany's colonies passed to the victors under a new Mandatory system (set up by Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations). The systems formed a novel experiment in the relations between a sovereign state and a dependent territory, involving a new departure in international law. Having judged Germany after World War I, the Western powers, after World War II, ironically were judged by world

²⁷ Report of the Commission Appointed by the Conference to Fix the Boundaries of the Basin of the Congo and Its Affluents, Annex to Protocol no. 3, Gavin and Betley, *Scramble for Africa*, pp. 241-3.

²⁸ W. Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, London 1972. L. H. Gann and P. Duignan, *Burden of*

Empire: An Appraisal of Western Colonialism in Africa South of the Sahara, New York 1967 (reprinted Stanford 1984). For a comparison between British and German colonial practices, see L. H. Gann and P. Duignan, *The Rulers of German Africa, 1884-1914*, Stanford 1977, and *The Rulers of British Africa, 1870-1914*, Stanford 1978.

opinion according to these selfsame standards and were generally found wanting. Though concerned, for the most part, with parochial objectives, the participants in the Berlin Conference had helped to write a new chapter in the history of international obligations.

Humanitarianism at Berlin: Myth or Reality?

SUZANNE MIERS

'It is indeed impossible to have watched the Conference proceedings from day to day without being impressed with the fact that . . . humanitarian considerations have occupied a prominent place in the discussions,' the British delegate proudly informed his government.¹ This image of the Berlin Conference suited all participants and has become one of the many myths that have been handed down about the meeting.

The aim of this chapter is to show that, while there was a general assumption among Europeans that colonial rule would automatically bring moral and material benefits to Africans, and was therefore justifiable as a 'civilizing' and hence humanitarian force, the two major humanitarian issues that were discussed at Berlin—the suppression of the slave trade and the limiting of the spirits traffic—were raised for clearly identifiable political and economic reasons. Moreover, it will be argued that multilateral treaties are of very limited value as safeguards against oppression and that the Berlin Act was of little consequence as a humanitarian instrument.

1. THE SLAVE TRADE AND THE BERLIN CONFERENCE

The first step towards international condemnation of the slave traffic had been taken by the Treaty of Vienna in 1815, which declared it 'repugnant to the principles of humanity and universal morality'.² However, it was not outlawed and signatories were not committed to any definite action. The issue had been raised by Britain, who had outlawed the slave traffic to British subjects in 1807 and then embarked upon what she saw as a long 'crusade' to get rival colonial and maritime powers to follow suit, so that they should not reap the fruits of her self-denial. The Vienna declaration, weak and virtually useless as it proved, was all that she could extract from the remaining beneficiaries of the traffic, particularly France, Spain, and Portugal, who saw any attack on it as an attempt to prevent the economic growth of their colonies. However, Britain, by various forms of pressure, subsequently secured a series of bilateral treaties condemning the slave trade and giving mutual rights to signatories to search each others' ships at sea. On the eve of the Berlin Conference Britain stood at the centre of this web of treaties which included all the major maritime and colonial powers except France, and numbers of African and Asian rulers and peoples.³

¹ Malet to Granville, 21 Feb. 1885, *Parliamentary Papers* (PP) LV 1884-5, C. 4284, p. 125, Africa no. 3.

² Declaration of the Eight Powers, relative to the Universal Abolition of the Slave Trade, 8 Feb. 1815, Annexe 15 to the Treaty of Vienna, 9 June 1815, E. Hertslet, L. Hertslet (eds.), *A Complete Collection of the Treaties and Conventions and Reciprocal Regulations, at Present*

subsisting between Great Britain and Foreign Powers, so far as they Relate to Commerce and Navigation, to the Repression and Abolition of the Slave Trade, 19 vols., London 1840-95, vol. 1, p. 9.

³ Many works could be cited but for a summary of the various treaties and their effects see S. Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, London 1975, chs. 1-3.

By this time the Atlantic slave trade had come to an end as, one by one, the colonial powers had outlawed slavery in their colonies and the independent nations in the Americas followed suit or, in the case of Brazil, stopped importing slaves.⁴ The export of African slaves to the Muslim world across the Sahara desert, the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean continued, but, largely as a result of British efforts, it had been much reduced. On the other hand the slave trade in Africa itself not only continued unchecked but was growing.⁵ In many areas it was playing a vital role in the development of the export traffic in 'legitimate' goods, which replaced slaves as the major export from much of the continent. This internal slave trade provided labour for the production of export goods as well as manpower for rulers building up their states. In some areas slaves served as a medium of exchange for the ever increasing quantities of arms, ammunition, and other imports traded in African markets.

By the early 1880s, rightly or wrongly, the British public regarded Britain's campaign against the slave trade as a humanitarian crusade, the brunt of which she had borne alone in the face of opposition from less altruistic powers. The suppression of the slave traffic was a popular cause considered to be an inextricable part of Britain's imperial mission to bring to subject peoples the *pax Britannica*, the rule of law, the Christian religion, and the end of slaving and slavery with its corollary—a free wage labour force operating in a free market economy. It was thus an integral part of an ideological package which justified the subjugation of colonial peoples and the reorganization of their social, political, economic, and religious structures. The degree to which this ideological package evolved simply in response to the needs of the British capitalist establishment is arguable, but it was certainly believed in by those vocal sections of the population, whose views were held to represent 'public opinion'. As a result a conventional wisdom existed in ruling circles to the effect that the antislavery cause was humanitarian—as well as economically sound—and that it was sufficiently popular for any lack of zeal on the part of the government to provoke criticism in press and Parliament. Of particular importance in this respect was the existence of a private organization—the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society—whose sole job it was to promote the anti-slavery cause primarily by keeping it in the public eye and pressuring the government to take action whenever the opportunity presented itself. Although it had only a few hundred members and was chronically short of funds, this society, through its links with members of both Houses of Parliament and with the press was able to exert pressure out of all proportion to its size.

British statesmen did not have the slave trade uppermost in their minds during the negotiations which led to the Berlin Conference. It had played its part, however, in the rejection of the Anglo-Portuguese treaty signed in February 1884.⁶ This treaty, which recognized Portuguese control over the mouth of the Congo, was opposed by business interests led by James Hutton and Sir William Mackinnon, who feared that Portugal would hamper British trade in an area hitherto open to the commerce of all nations and in which Britain had a stake. Instead they wanted it to come under the control of King Leopold II of Belgium, whom they believed to be a philanthropic monarch (an image

⁴ Brazil did not outlaw slavery until 1888 but she took effective action against the import of slaves from 1851.

⁵ See P. E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*, Cambridge 1983, pp. 135 ff.

⁶ See R. Anstey, *Britain and the Congo in the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford 1962, ch. 6; F. Latour da Veigã Pinto, *Le Portugal et le Congo au XIX^e siècle*, Paris 1972, pp. 211 ff.

carefully fostered by the king) who would promote free trade in Central Africa. The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society supported their agitation because of Portugal's poor record against the slave trade. Protestant missionaries also supported it, fearing that the Roman Catholic Portuguese would discriminate against them. The support of these bodies gave the agitation a sounder moral basis than it would have had had it consisted merely of businessmen protecting their economic interests. But their combined representations merely delayed the ratification of the treaty until the opposition of other powers and its rejection by Germany in June 1884 finally killed it.

This was a diplomatic defeat for Britain, who lost the initiative in the Congo question to Germany. Bismarck after long negotiations got French support for the calling of the Berlin Conference, in order to secure freedom of trade and navigation on the Congo, freedom at least of navigation on the Niger, and an agreement on a formula for future annexations on the African coast.⁷ The Conference arose, therefore, from a diplomatic defeat for Britain, and appeared to pose a threat to her interests in Africa.

During the summer of 1884, the British were primarily concerned with protecting these interests by establishing protectorates in the Oil Rivers, on the Lower Niger, and in Somaliland. They were worried by the Franco-German *rapprochement* at a time when they needed German support in Egypt, as well as by French and German expansion in Africa, and by King Leopold's moves to consolidate his position on the Congo. All of these were threats to their hitherto unchallenged informal domination of much of the African coast. They had no objections to a conference as such and strongly supported free trade and navigation on the Congo but were afraid of losing their pre-eminence on the lower Niger, where George Goldie and his National African Company were already hard at work buying up competitors and signing treaties with local rulers as the basis for applying for a charter giving them power to administer the region for the British government.⁸

Early in November 1884, while Foreign Office officials wrestled with these territorial and economic problems, members of the Anti-Slavery Society personally delivered a letter urging the Foreign Secretary, Lord Granville, to ensure that any agreement over the Congo should prohibit slavery and the slave trade and suggesting that W. H. Wyld, who had been head of the Foreign Office Slave Trade Department, should accompany the delegation to Berlin as an adviser. They were assured that the matter would not 'be lost sight of'.⁹ Indeed the instructions to the British delegates, Percy Anderson, head of the African Department of the Foreign Office, and the ambassador in Berlin, Sir Edward Malet, told them that:

commercial interests should not, in the opinion of Her Majesty's Government, be looked upon as exclusively the subject of deliberation; while the opening of the Congo markets is to be desired the welfare of the natives should not be neglected; to them it would be of no benefit, but the reverse, if freedom of commerce, unchecked by reasonable control, should degenerate into license. Her Majesty's Government trust that this will be borne in mind, and that such precautions will be adopted for the regulation of legitimate commerce as may tend to insure, as

⁷ These negotiations are dealt with in a number of other chapters in this volume. See especially the contributions by S. Kanya-Forstner, G. de Courcel, and W. J. Mommsen.

⁸ J. E. Flint, *Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria*, London 1960, pp. 34 ff. and chapter by the same author

in this volume.

⁹ British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (BFAS) to Granville, 5 Nov. 1884, Public Record Office, Foreign Office 84 (Slave Trade) (henceforth FO 84) 1814 and minute of 14 Nov. 1884.

far as possible, that its introduction will confer the advantages of civilization on the natives, and extinguish such evils as the internal slave trade, by which their progress is at present retarded. The principal which will command the sympathy and support of Her Majesty's Government will be that of the advancement of legitimate commerce, with security for the equality of treatment of all nations, and for the well-being of the native races.

Granville also expressed the hope that Malet would find an opportunity during the Conference to draw attention to the slave trade and the import of spirits, questions on which 'there is strong feeling in this country' and the evils of which were so well known that all powers would want to minimize them.¹⁰

There is no evidence that these were more than mere platitudes since no concrete proposals were made. Such vague instructions were probably issued for their cosmetic value in a Blue Book and to appease the humanitarians, rather than with the intention of producing results.

On the eve of the Conference, however, the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, Sir Julian Pauncefote, suddenly realized that real capital might be made of the slavery issue, and wrote to Granville:

This country is not likely to gain or lose anything by the Conference. The 'eclat' of it, such as it is, will appertain to Germany. It has occurred to me that Great Britain might carry off all the honours of the meeting by being the first to propose (on so fitting an occasion) an international Declaration in relation to the *traffic in slaves* (la *Traité*), as distinguished from the institution of Slavery, making it a crime against the *Law of Nations*. . . . The Declaration might be 'La *Traité* des Esclaves est désormais un crime interdit par le Droit des Gens, et de la compétence des Tribunaux de tous les pays civilisés, quelque soit la nationalité de l'inculpe'. If the Powers should object to the generality of that Declaration, we might propose to restrict it to Africa,

'but'—and herein lay the whole purpose—'the honour and credit of proposing either Declaration . . . should be reserved to this country—and . . . no time should be lost in apprising Prince Bismarck of our intention to propose such a Declaration, otherwise we may be forestalled.' Granville immediately appreciated the political value at home and abroad of such a proposal and minuted: 'many thanks I quite agree'.

Since Pauncefote feared the United States 'will be before us if we do not secure the first claim to making the proposal',¹¹ a telegram was dispatched post-haste to Malet, with instructions to do what was 'needful' to ensure that he was first with the suggestion.¹²

The proposal was far reaching since it branded the slave trade everywhere—on land as well as at sea—as a crime 'cognizable by the tribunals of all civilized countries whatever the nationality of the accused'. It could have been even more stringent had it been declared piracy, as the Anti-Slavery Society, which sent a deputation to see Granville on 18 November, now proposed.¹³ But British officials knew that this would never be accepted by the maritime powers as it would render slavers liable to seizure at sea irrespective of the flag they flew, thus giving the warships of all nations the right to interfere with commercial shipping.¹⁴

¹⁰ Instructions to Malet, 7 Nov. 1884, no. 59 Af. PP LV 1884-5, C. 4241 Africa, no. 8 (1884).

¹¹ Pauncefote to Granville, minutes, 14 Nov. 1884 (underlined as in original) and Granville minute, FO 84/1814.

¹² Granville to Malet, 15 Nov. 1884, no. 82 Af., *ibid.*

¹³ BFAS to Granville, 21 Nov. 1884, FO 84/1815.

¹⁴ Minute by Pauncefote on Allen to Pauncefote, private, 21 Nov. 1884, *ibid.*

As it was, Bismarck thought the declaration went too far and would cause 'problems' in Africa since declaring the African overland traffic a crime would require special legislation.¹⁵ The exclusion of this internal African trade, however, would ruin the effect of the declaration; and the Anti-Slavery Society feared that it would even mean that a slaver with a cargo for export cornered off the coast could beach her slaves without fear of pursuit.¹⁶ The British legal expert, Sir Travers Twiss, also agreed with Bismarck that the declaration should only apply to the export slave trade but this was for fear that any attack on the internal slave trade would disorganize the 'social system of the natives'.¹⁷ As Twiss and German Foreign Office officials tried to reach agreement on the details of the declaration, the British concluded that all Bismarck would accept was a 'moral' declaration with no legal force.¹⁸

Italy on the other hand almost stole Britain's thunder by proposing that the trade be declared piracy,¹⁹ while the United States wanted to bind the signatory powers not to allow slave dealing in their territories and to expel slavers. This last suggestion was opposed by France since it would require changes in criminal law to allow banishment without trial.²⁰ In fact, the French had not envisaged the slave trade being raised at the Conference²¹ and maintained that general statements of principle were beyond its scope. They suggested that only those powers with territories in the 'conventional basin' of the Congo should be bound to take action against the traffic.²²

Finally a compromise was reached embodying some of the British and United States proposals.²³ Thus the Berlin Act simply declared the maritime (export) slave trade forbidden by international law and that the operations—on land and sea—which furnished slaves for it 'ought likewise to be regarded as forbidden'—whatever that might mean. The powers with territories in the conventional basin of the Congo further undertook to prevent their dominions from being used as markets or transit routes for this export traffic and bound themselves to employ 'all the means at their disposal' to end it and to punish those engaged in it. They also agreed to 'watch over the preservation of the native tribes, and to care for the improvement of the conditions of their moral and material well-being, and to help in suppressing slavery and especially the slave trade'.²⁴

As Clement Hill of the Foreign Office commented, this was 'sadly milk and watery'²⁵ and fell far short of Britain's original proposal which would have branded the slave trade in *all its forms an international crime*. Moreover, no machinery was established for enforcement of the declarations, no common action was agreed upon, and no concrete measures were suggested. Each power was simply left to take what action it wished in its own time.

¹⁵ Malet to Granville, no. 104 conf., Af., 24 Nov. 1884, *ibid.*

¹⁶ *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, Series 4, vol. 4, no. 10, 16 Dec. 1884.

¹⁷ Malet to Granville, no. 27 Af., tel., 26 Nov. 1884, FO 84/1815.

¹⁸ Minute by Pauncefote, 9 Dec. 1884 on Twiss to Pauncefote, 3 Dec. 1884; Pauncefote to Selbourne, 8 Dec. 1884, and enc., FO 84/1816.

¹⁹ Minute on Protocol 2 of the Conference of Berlin, FO 84/1815.

²⁰ Protocol 6, 22 Dec. 1884, FO 84/1926. Banishment was not in the criminal code of some signatories.

²¹ Instructions to French plenipotentiaries, no. 140, 8 Nov. 1884, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères Français (MAEF), Correspondence Politique (CP), Allemagne/61.

²² Courcel to MAEF, 6 Jan. 1885, *ibid.*; Malet to Granville, tel. no. 76, 22 Dec. 1884, FO 84/1818.

²³ For final US proposal see Malet to Granville, no. 273, Af., 23 Dec. 1884, *ibid.*

²⁴ Articles 6 and 9 Berlin Act, E. Hertslet, *The Map of Africa by Treaty*, 3 vols., London 1909, 3rd edn., vol. 2, pp. 473-4.

²⁵ Minute by Hill, 7 Jan. 1885, on Malet to Granville, no. 5, Af., 5 Jan. 1885, FO 84/1819.

However, Britain at least could be satisfied, as Hill pointed out: 'The Protocols of the Conference will show that it is not our fault the agreement . . . is not more practical' and this after all had been the main purpose of the declaration. To Hill's gratification the Anti-Slavery Society hailed it as a 'step in the right direction'.²⁶

Interestingly the society had also suggested that the British press for the abolition of the disguised form of slaving by which freed slaves were cajoled into so-called free labour contracts for work in the French Antilles, Réunion, or the Portuguese islands of São Tomé and Príncipe. In order to disarm suspicions that Britain was inspired not by humanitarianism but by the desire to deny labour to the French colonies, while supplying her own from her vast Indian empire; Malet was told to get the matter raised by a 'disinterested power'.²⁷ He found it impossible but the Foreign Office protected its image by presenting the correspondence to Parliament to show that it had tried to 'bring on the question'.²⁸

2. THE LIQUOR TRAFFIC AND THE BERLIN CONFERENCE

While the slave trade was raised by Britain at Berlin primarily to secure a moral victory which would impress the British electorate, the liquor traffic, although presented as a humanitarian issue, was brought up at the instance of George Goldie, who was activated by sound commercial reasons.

The question certainly had its humanitarian aspects. At the time of the Berlin Conference there was a militant temperance movement in Britain supported by associations all over the country and strongly upheld by Churches and missionary societies. Those who supported temperance at home considered that the export of spirits to Africa was one of the worst evils to emerge from the growing trade between that continent and the Western world. Humanitarians, headed by the missionaries and the Aborigines' Protection Society—a small privately funded society like the Anti-Slavery Society—condemned the liquor traffic as demoralizing, unproductive, and a hindrance to the spread of Western civilization. It was widely believed that Africans were not only more prone to drunkenness than Europeans, but that the consumption of liquor encouraged other 'social evils'.²⁹ Thus the Church Missionary Society in all seriousness warned Granville at the time of the Conference that it excited 'these uncultured savages . . . to carry on to a yet greater extent their dreadful practices of human sacrifices and cannibalism' and that it even threatened to 'destroy . . . tribes'.³⁰ Petitions received by the government during the Berlin Conference made it clear that action against the liquor traffic would appeal to a vocal section of the British electorate.³¹

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Granville to Malet, no. 154 conf., 13 Dec. 1884, FO 84/1817; Malet to Granville, no. 69 Af., 31 Jan. 1885, FO 84/1820.

²⁸ Hill minute on Malet to Granville, no. 69 Af., 31 Jan. 1885, FO 84/1820.

²⁹ See *inter alia* E. A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842-1914*, London 1966, ch. 10.

³⁰ Memorial from the Church Missionary Society, Dec. 1884, FO 84/1818.

³¹ Petition received 9 Dec. 1884 from the Church of England Temperance Committee, the Executive Council of the United Kingdom Alliance, and the Committee of the National Temperance League; letters also came from the Cambridge Temperance Society, the Church of England Temperance Society North Brixton, the Church Missionary Society, The London Missionary Society, and the Aborigines' Protection Society see FO 84/1816, FO 84/1817, FO 84/1818.

The traffic in what were called 'trade spirits' however, was a staple of commerce in some parts of Western and Southern Africa and they were a form of currency in places such as the lower Niger, the Congo, and the Zambezi.³² The trade was well established and growing; but, although they were extraordinarily cheap to produce,³³ these liquors were so bulky and expensive to transport that the traffic was still limited to areas near the coast and navigable waterways and consumption was largely confined to the élite. Moreover, the large Muslim populations, mainly concentrated in the Sudanic belt and in parts of Eastern Africa, did not consume alcohol if they held strictly to the tenets of Islam. At the time of the Berlin Conference therefore much of the continent was still beyond the range of this traffic.

In those areas where it was already entrenched it was an important item of commerce for European merchants. In the British West African colonies customs duties on imported spirits provided a significant part of their revenues and such duties had proved more acceptable to Africans than direct taxes. To officials, therefore, the liquor trade was a heaven-sent source of income. Moreover, duties on it could be justified as humanitarian measures to cut consumption.³⁴ Humanitarians considered raising revenues by taxing spirits immoral, but nevertheless better than allowing the traffic to grow unchecked and to spread into as yet 'uncontaminated' areas.

There was, however, a practical problem. As long as the British West African colonies were tiny enclaves surrounded by independent peoples, high duties threatened simply to drive trade to rivers and ports not under British control and British colonies stood to lose not only revenues but a valuable part of their commerce.³⁵ Moreover, all trade was believed to be likely to follow the traffic in leading articles. Already the British feared a decline in trade as a result of the fear of African traders that their slave porters might desert and seek freedom in British colonies. If, added to this, Britain alone imposed taxes on liquor, she was likely to drive commerce away to the benefit of her colonial rivals. Faced with this problem in Sierra Leone and at Lagos, colonial administrators had simply established customs posts beyond their actual borders thus widening the catchment areas for trade without assuming the expense and responsibility of actually governing them. In South Africa where colonies were much bigger both the Cape and Natal charged higher duties on imported spirits than the British West African colonies and they imposed licensing laws to control the sale of spirits to Africans within their borders. Taxes on locally produced liquor were lower however, and both colonies competed fiercely with the Afrikaaner republics and the Portuguese for the trade with the Africans beyond their frontiers. In both Western and Southern Africa restriction of the traffic was only possible if the whole coast was under European control and all governments agreed on a common policy and took steps to enforce it. In 1884, great stretches of the coast were still independent.

³² A. M. Kirk-Greene, 'The Major Currencies in Nigerian History', in: *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 2 (1960), pp. 132-50; D. J. Rankin, 'The Peoples and Commercial Prospects of the Zambesi Basin', in: *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 9 (1893), pp. 225-40; W. T. Hornaday, *Free Rum on the Congo*, Chicago 1887, pp. 71-2.

³³ A case of 12 bottles (1 ¼ imperial gallons) of

German gin shipped free from Hamburg was estimated by the Colonial Office (CO) to cost only 2s. 4d. in 1889: minutes of a meeting at the CO, 8 Jan. 1890, Foreign Office Confidential Print (FOCP) 6197.

³⁴ CO to FO, 15 Apr. 1885, PRO 30/29/147.

³⁵ For further discussion of the problem of raising taxes on spirits see Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, pp. 173-4, 272-84.

Moreover, the great exporter of the cheap trade spirits sold in West Africa was Germany. Other suppliers were Holland and the United States. But the bulk of the spirits sold on the Niger were German and in 1884 trade spirits accounted for 66 per cent of the value of Hamburg's rapidly growing West African trade.³⁶ By contrast, although British traders dealt heavily in these liquors, no important British manufacturing interests would be threatened by restrictions on the traffic.³⁷

There is no indication that the British intended at the outset of the Conference to raise the question. It is true that Granville had chided Bismarck, during the discussions of the Anglo-Portuguese treaty, for his unwillingness to impose a tariff of more than 10 per cent *ad valorem* on brandy, informing him that most colonial powers taxed spirits 'with a view to preventing the demoralization . . . of the native races'.³⁸ But Malet's instructions for the Berlin Conference, merely contained as an afterthought the hope that the liquor traffic 'might be placed on a satisfactory footing'.³⁹ At Berlin the matter was actually first raised by Italy, supported by the United States.⁴⁰

It seems unlikely that any concrete proposals would have been made had not the British delegates, particularly Anderson, come under the influence of George Goldie, who was in Berlin as an unofficial adviser to the British delegation and whose aims were to further interests of his National African Company. Although Goldie made his case on humanitarian grounds, restriction of the liquor traffic on the Niger could be of great value to him. On the lower river palm oil kernels in quantity could only be had in exchange for spirits.⁴¹ This region was now under British protection and Goldie expected his company to be given a charter to administer it. If high duties could be imposed on the import of liquor, the company would simply pay these duties to itself in its administrative capacity, whereas its competitors would bear the full burden of the tax. Moreover, if the company could forbid free transit of spirits on the Niger, it could prevent rival traders from carrying spirits up river for sale in the still untapped markets to the north, as well as from smuggling them back into company territory. Prohibiting the transit of spirits would thus give the company a monopoly of the liquor traffic.⁴² Such a monopoly in a major item of trade would deal a blow to the whole concept of free trade and transit on the Niger. It could therefore only be suggested as a humanitarian measure.

There is no evidence in the Foreign Office correspondence that Anderson was deliberately furthering Goldie's monopolistic commercial aims. Certainly Clement Hill, a clerk at the Foreign Office, did not, initially at least, understand them, for he commented that high duties on the Niger would be 'in the interests of humanity and

³⁶ The value of the spirits exported from Hamburg to West Africa in 1884 was one and a half times the total sent to all of Africa in 1883. For estimates of the quantities exported see Office of the Committee of the Privy Council for Trade (OCPC) to FO, 5 Nov. 1884, FO 84/1814; F. M. Zahn, *Der Westafrikanische Brantweinhandel: Erwiderung auf die offene Antwort des Herrn Reichstagsabgeordneten A. Woermann*, Gütersloh 1886, pp. 11-12.; Hornaday, *Free Rum*, p. 90.

³⁷ The average price of British spirits exported to West Africa in 1883 was 4s. 11½d., more than double the cost of German spirits, PRO Customs 9/93. Moreover, spirits made up only 1.76 per cent (£43,999) of the total value of

£2,487,524 of British manufactured goods sent to West Africa: *ibid.*, and OCPC to FO, 5 Nov. 1884, FO 84/1814.

³⁸ Granville to Amptill, no. 10 Af., 30 June 1884, FO 84/1812 and *PP Africa* no. 7 (1884), LV, 1884-5.

³⁹ Granville to Malet, no. 65 Af., 12 Nov. 1884, FO 84/1812 and *PP Africa* no. 3 (1884), LV, 1884-5.

⁴⁰ Protocol 2, *PP Africa* no. 4 (1884), LV, 1884-5.

⁴¹ Flint, *Goldie*, pp. 79-80.

⁴² For a discussion of how Goldie later benefited from this monopoly see *ibid.*, pp. 112 ff. For the company's status and the necessity of this monopoly for its survival see chapters in this volume by J. Flint and by C. Newbury.

not to our advantage',⁴³ while T. V. Lister, the Assistant Under-Secretary, thought prohibiting the transit of spirits on the Lower Niger would be 'useless and only certain to encourage smuggling'.⁴⁴ The reaction of the Colonial Office, which was hastily consulted, was that the liquor traffic should only be prohibited on the Niger if all powers agreed to it, as, if they refused, British traders would be excluded from a lucrative traffic and Africans would still get spirits. The Colonial Office certainly was not contemplating British self-denial for humanitarian reasons.⁴⁵

Goldie, however, appears to have argued the case on humanitarian grounds, contending that the traffic was harmful to Africans, but stretching the point to say that it served no economic purpose since it did not lead to a demand for other European goods.⁴⁶ Anderson, acknowledging that he was much influenced by Goldie, put the question to his superiors on humanitarian grounds, having, he explained, also consulted the explorer Henry Morton Stanley as to the spirits traffic in the Congo, the missionary Dr Laws as to its effects in Nyasaland, and 'many others', including German and Dutch traders.⁴⁷

The problem, he informed Granville, was to find a way of reconciling 'the laws of humanity with the interests of commerce which will in future claim perfect freedom in Central Africa and freedom of transit to the regions beyond the British Protectorates on the Niger'. Ideally, he thought, all Africans should be protected from European spirits. On the coast, however, their consumption was 'already general' and gin and rum were even a medium of exchange. In Central Africa, reached largely by way of the Congo, Africans brewed 'beers', and these caused 'moral degradation' since they took readily to drinking European liquor: 'and the effect on them, when they drink largely, is disastrous; they know no moderation; the excitement of the brain makes them quarrelsome and uncontrollable; diseases which were comparatively harmless become malignant, and liver complaints rapidly carry them off.' At present, he continued, transport costs severely limited consumption in the interior and away from navigable waterways. But, 'if, as it anticipated in many quarters, the natives rapidly become rich by the development of trade, the luxury will be brought within their reach, and . . . the process of civilization and demoralization may be simultaneous.' The disaster might be all the greater if Africans also learned 'the art of distillation' and produced cheap spirits themselves.

In regions of the 'Central Niger and Lake Chad', he wrote, the Muslim population did not drink alcohol at all:

but the introduction of foreign spirits might create a taste, congenial, apparently to the African nature, which would overwhelm the barriers of custom and religion, and the fact that the population is more highly civilized would increase the reproach to civilized nations of being agents of its demoralization, while its greater wealth would facilitate its fall.⁴⁸

The British persuaded the Conference to agree that, in the areas of the Niger under their protection, they could impose whatever duties they wished. And they made it

⁴³ Hill minute on Malet to Granville, no. 214 Af., 12 Dec. 1884, FO 84/1817.

⁴⁴ Lister minute on Malet to Granville, tel. no. 50 Af., 6 Dec. 1884, FO 84/1816.

⁴⁵ CO to FO, 10 Dec. 1884, FO 84/1817.

⁴⁶ Goldie argued along these lines in 1895, K. K. D.

Nworah, 'Humanitarian Pressure Groups and British Attitudes to West Africa 1895-1915', London Ph.D. 1966, p. 153.

⁴⁷ Memorandum by Anderson enclosed in Malet to Granville, no. 263 Af., 22 Dec. 1884, in FOCP 5051 no. 241.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

clear these would be prohibitive for humanitarian reasons. But when they suggested that the powers controlling the Conventional Basin of the Congo should also prevent the sale of spirits to Africans, the Germans, Dutch, and French vigorously opposed them. The British were forced to drop the attempt to restrict the trade in areas where it was already established.

They, therefore, appealed to the Conference, 'in the interests of humanity', to prohibit the transit of spirits on the lower Niger to save the still 'uncontaminated' and largely Muslim peoples of the central Niger basin and Lake Chad regions—an estimated 40 million—from the evils of the traffic. They did not fail to point out that the only vested interests were those of their own National African Company, which was ready to make this sacrifice in the belief that the commercial advantages of the traffic would be counterbalanced by the injury to trade should alcoholism cause a relapse into 'barbarism'.⁴⁹

Italy, Belgium, and the United States supported these noble sentiments but the Germans, who had the most to lose, were determined to protect their existing and potential markets. The Dutch and French supported them. None of them believed in British humanitarianism—as the French ambassador informed his government:

Comme le trafic de cette denrée procure des bénéfices considérables à des maisons dépendant le plus souvent de pays autres que la Grande Bretagne, on peut supposer qu'un certain sentiment de concurrence commerciale fortifie les Anglais dans les principes d'humanité et de tempérance dont ils se font avec tant de persistance les défenseurs au profit des populations Africaines voisines du Niger.⁵⁰

In the end the Conference merely expressed a wish that the colonial governments who controlled the Congo and the Niger should reach agreements on the liquor traffic which would 'reconcile the rights of humanity with the interests of commerce'. Anderson hoped that this would prevent any power from challenging whatever liquor regulations Britain might impose on the Niger as well as any steps which African rulers might take, either of their own volition or under the influence of missionaries of other whites, to control the traffic in their dominions. He also thought that the powers in the conventional basin of the Congo might be able to impose restrictions through police and health regulations.⁵¹ The French, and doubtless the other protagonists of free trade in spirits, however, only agreed to the resolution because it was so vague as to be harmless.⁵²

However, as in the case of the slave trade, Foreign Office officials could take heart from the fact that the protocols of the Conference showed that Britain had 'taken the highest line' and done her best 'irrespective of money considerations'.⁵³ This was politically valuable as the whole discussion had been carefully followed by the temperance societies, by missionary societies, and by the Aborigines' Protection Society.

Britain thus emerged from the Berlin Conference not only with her leadership of the world anti-slavery movement unchallenged but also as the protagonist of a new

⁴⁹ Memorandum by Anderson, conf., 10 Dec. 1884, enclosed in Malet to Granville, no. 214 Af., FO 84/1817.

⁵⁰ Courcel to MAEF, 6 Jan. 1885, CP Allemagne 61.

⁵¹ Memorandum by Anderson, enclosed in Malet to

Granville, no. 263 Af., 22 Dec. 1884 FOCP 5051 no. 241.

⁵² Courcel to MAEF, 19 Dec. 1884, CP Allemagne 60.

⁵³ Hill minute on Malet to Granville, no. 207 Af., 10 Dec. 1884, FO 84/1817.

crusade—the protection of Africans from the evils of the trade in cheap trade spirits. She had won, in her own eyes at least, a moral victory on the international stage. Incidentally, she had also secured a valuable advantage for Goldie's company soon to become the Royal Niger Company, charged with the administration of what was eventually to become Northern Nigeria. British officials lost no sleep over their failure to secure further-reaching agreements. The mere publications of the protocols of the Conference achieved their immediate aims. This is not to say that they did not genuinely believe that both the slave trade and the liquor traffic were evils which should be eradicated. They undoubtedly believed it. But they made their proposals at Berlin knowing that they would not be accepted by the other powers and with the clear intention of gaining a moral victory which would rally support from humanitarians at home,⁵⁴ including Church groups and the temperance movement.

Of greater practical value than the platitudes—or what some newspapers called the 'hollow humanitarianism'—of the Berlin Act, were the bilateral agreements which Britain continued to sign with other powers. Thus, while the Conference was sitting she recognized King Leopold as ruler of the Congo and exchanged declarations in which he bound himself to suppress the slave trade and slavery.

3. THE VALUE OF THE BERLIN ACT AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR THE PROMOTION OF 'NATIVE WELFARE'

It has been argued that the Berlin Act was of importance in setting up 'a new international standard' whereby colonial powers might judge each other and be judged themselves.⁵⁵ Certainly the treaty contained high-minded sentiments, and condemned both the liquor traffic and the slave trade. It also put it on record that 'native welfare' was a matter of international concern and thus carried a stage further the process haltingly begun in Vienna in 1815. But far more important in this respect was the Brussels Act of 1890.

This was the treaty signed by the Brussels Conference of 1889–90,⁵⁶ which the British Prime Minister of the day, Lord Salisbury, boasted was the first international official gathering ever to meet solely 'for the purpose of promoting a matter of pure humanity and goodwill'. Humanitarians hailed it as a triumph. This conference was instigated by the British who had several primary aims. They wanted to ensure that all their colonial neighbours were bound to take action against the slave trade, because if they alone did so, African traders would simply take their commerce elsewhere. They also wanted to retain their leadership of the anti-slavery movement because of its domestic popularity and the moral edge it gave them over other powers. Finally they wanted to reinforce and extend the restrictions on the spirits traffic which they had tried to get at Berlin. Other powers, and particularly King Leopold II, who hosted it, agreed to the Conference in order to further particular schemes of their own. Among these was control of the arms traffic, which was now raised as a humanitarian question.

⁵⁴ W. R. Louis, 'The Berlin Congo Conference', in P. Gifford and W. R. Louis (eds.), *France and Britain in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule*, New Haven 1971, pp. 167–220, here p. 218.

⁵⁵ See chapter in this volume by L. H. Gann.

⁵⁶ For this conference see Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, pp. 236 ff.

At the time of the Berlin Conference, munitions were an even more important staple of African trade than spirits, and some of the arms and ammunition for this commerce were made in Britain.⁵⁷ British policy was inconsistent. In their colonies the British imposed customs duties on the trade to raise revenues. In some cases they allowed merchants to import arms and ammunition freely for sale beyond their borders, in others they restricted them. They also supplied them to friendly rulers but tried to prevent them from reaching potential enemies. In spite of their pragmatic policies, Granville had raised the matter with Germany in a humanitarian guise when commenting on Bismarck's rejection of the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty. He regretted, he wrote, that Germany would not agree to special tariffs on arms and ammunition as these had usually been imposed in African colonies to prevent 'the mutual destruction of the native races'.⁵⁸ He did not make any proposal on arms restrictions at Berlin, however. At the time there seemed to be no strong humanitarian support for it in Britain and the arms manufacturers would have objected. Anyway the Germans made it clear that, with the increasing importance of the arms trade to Hamburg, they would not contemplate any limitation on the traffic in the Berlin Act.⁵⁹

By the time of the Brussels Conference the situation had changed dramatically. Germany was anxious to limit the trade to prevent the rebels in her East African territory from getting arms, while the British wanted restrictions in some areas, as on the Niger where they would reinforce Goldie's trade monopoly, on parts of the West African coast to prevent revenue loss from smuggling, and on the Red Sea coast, but they wanted to keep their freedom of action in other regions, notably Southern Africa. British humanitarians, however, now lobbied heartily for restrictions on the traffic. Thus at Brussels, the restriction of the munitions traffic took its place as a 'humanitarian' cause along with the suppression of the slave trade and the limiting of the spirits trade, although each cause was supported by its particular protagonists for political, fiscal, or economic motives.

The Brussels Act was thus ostensibly a humanitarian treaty to protect Africans against the internal and export slave trade and the liquor and arms trafficking. It bound signatories to take practical measures against them in certain zones and it established machinery of a sorts to supervise their enforcement. It was a far more important landmark than the Berlin Act in terms of 'writing a new chapter in the history of international obligations'.⁶⁰ However, those who framed it, who hammered out compromises over many months, had far from humanitarian motives. In fact, the treaty enabled the colonial powers to justify the entire conquest of Africa in humanitarian terms.

In practice, however, like the Berlin Act it had little value as a humanitarian instrument. The slave trade was gradually eradicated, not because of the treaty but because the colonial powers found it to their advantage to prevent the disorders and depopulation it caused or were afraid of an outcry at home if they did not take action. Where they found it advantageous, as in the case of Angola, it continued, for a while

⁵⁷ For further details see *ibid.*, pp. 182 ff, 261 ff.

⁵⁸ Granville to Amptill, no. 10 Af., 30 June 1884, FO 84/1812.

⁵⁹ Malet to Granville, no. 207 Af., 10 Dec. 1884, FO 84/1817.

⁶⁰ In my book cited in n. 56 above I made claims for the Brussels Act similar to those put forward by Gann in this volume. Further research on the anti-slavery movement since 1890 has led me to reconsider them.

openly and then in disguised form, for many years.⁶¹ An international obligation to act in concert against an accepted evil did not of itself ensure even minimal action, let alone co-operation.

Moreover, neither the Berlin nor the Brussels Acts even addressed the mechanisms by which the colonial powers exploited Africa labour. In spite of the high-minded ideals voiced in these agreements, political and economic systems were established in Africa which benefited the metropolises and exploited rather than protected Africans. The mere existence of a treaty expressing moral sentiments did not mean that they would be invoked against a colonial power unless there was a definite advantage to be had—as in the case of the division of the German colonies after World War I—or there was a domestic outcry which forced a government to lodge protests—as in the case of British protests over the contract labour trade to the Portuguese islands, or the outcry over King Leopold's regime in the Congo Free State.

The subsequent history of the slave trade question well illustrates the limited value of international obligations—even when international machinery is established to monitor their enforcement. The Brussels Act was abrogated in 1919 but some of its provisions were taken up by the League of Nations and after World War II they passed to the United Nations. Both bodies negotiated important treaties against slavery and related practices, notably the Convention of 1926 and the Supplementary Convention of 1956. These are impressive on paper. So is the array of international bodies established to deal with the question—the various slavery committees established by the League and United Nations, ending with the present United Nations Working Group on Slavery which has met annually in Geneva since 1974. These bodies all launched inquiries and brought the matter to public attention. However, a careful study of their operations does little to inspire confidence in their effectiveness.⁶² In fact the internationalization of such questions, while it may boost the humanitarian conscience, often enables politicians to avoid action by the simple expedient of claiming that they are the responsibility of an international body. As a result they become no one's responsibility.

⁶¹ For the long continuance of the traffic in Angola and the way in which it supplied labour for the Portuguese sector of the economy, see L. Heywood, 'Slavery and Forced Labor in the Changing Political Economy of Central Angola, 1890-1949', in S. Miers and R.

Roberts (eds.), *The End of Slavery in Africa*, forthcoming.

⁶² For a preliminary study of these bodies see S. Miers, 'Britain and the Suppression of Slavery 1919-39', unpublished paper given at the School of Oriental and African Studies, African History Seminar, 10 June 1981.

Africa as *terra nullius*: The Berlin Conference and International Law*

JÖRG FISCH

1. THE DOUBLE ASPECT OF THE CONFERENCE

From the viewpoint of a historian of international law, the Berlin Conference and its General Act display a peculiar combination of elements which pointed to the future and at the same time echoed aspects of the past. For the first time in history, all the European powers concerned assembled at a great conference for the specific purpose of resolving colonial disputes in a peaceful and comprehensive manner. This led to both an extension as well as a development of various aspects of international law such as, for example, rules relating to free trade, the international administration of rivers, the integration of Africa in the Universal Postal Union, and the law governing neutrality.

Such progressive elements, however, were finally no more than secondary manifestations of the essentially regressive character of the Conference. This was the logical consequence of a tradition in which Europe claimed unilateral control over non-European territories. Thus Africa was not the subject but the object of the Conference. This seems to have been self-evident to all the delegates right from the beginning. During the preparatory stage, no consideration whatsoever appears to have been given to the possibility of also inviting African states even though Zanzibar's full sovereignty was acknowledged at the time by all the important European states.¹ This is all the more extraordinary since, on the other hand, even states which had no significant interests in Africa were invited and participated—Austria-Hungary, for example, Denmark and Sweden-Norway—which can be explained only in terms of the intention to treat Africa as an object.

When the consequences of the Conference are taken into consideration, then the discrepancy between progressive and regressive elements is all the more striking. The attempts to develop international law for the most part came to nothing: the internationalization of rivers was meaningless in practice and during the First World War the Congo Basin did not remain neutral. After 1885, on the other hand, the partitioning of Africa proceeded almost without interruption and, for the most part, unchallenged. Of course, this was not an intrinsic consequence of the Conference of Berlin though it did at least contribute to this process. In this article, therefore, I shall concentrate on the retrospective aspects of the Conference, that is to say, the basis in international law for the partitioning of Africa. While partly created by the Conference

* Translated by Eamon Helly and J. P. Cowood.

¹ During the Conference, in a discussion with the French delegate Courcel, Bismarck called the Sultan of Zanzibar 'un souverain qui compte. Il exerce une

autorité qui se fait sentir.' Courcel to Ferry, 27 Nov. 1884, in *Documents diplomatiques français, 1871-1914*, 1st series (1871-1900), 16 vols., Paris 1929-59, vol. 5, p. 490, no. 468.

itself, this basis was for the most part simply assumed as a matter of course. The significance of such a basis lies less in power politics than in the ideological sphere. The Europeans had the power to annex Africa even without the provisions on occupation contained in the Berlin Act. However, the Conference demonstrated the need to clothe the annexation with legitimacy. This legitimation is the subject of my study. Finally, there will also be a brief review of the non-colonial aspects of international law whose development was at least aspired to by the Conference.

The real basis for the Conference, in so far as it related to the partitioning of Africa, was Chapter 6 of the Act:

Declaration relative to the essential Conditions to be observed in order that new Occupations on the Coasts of the African Continent may be held to be effective.

Article 34. Any power which henceforth takes possession of a tract of land on the coasts of the African continent outside of its present possessions, or which being hitherto without such possessions, shall acquire them, as well as the Power which assumes a protectorate there, shall accompany the respective act with a notification thereof, addressed to the other Signatory Powers of the present Act, in order to enable them, if need be, to make good any claims of their own.

Article 35. The Signatory Powers of the present Act recognize the obligation to insure the establishment of authority in the regions occupied by them on the coasts of the African Continent sufficient to protect existing rights, and, as the case may be, freedom of trade and of transit under the conditions agreed upon.

Here there is no mention of *why* the powers are authorized to occupy African territories or assume protectorates over them. That they are authorized is already an established fact; it remains merely to specify *how* they are to proceed in this. However, the key to the answer to the question of European titles lies in these provisions. Therefore, I shall first consider the history of Chapter 6 of the Berlin Act. After this, the background to the concepts used, in particular 'occupation' and 'protectorate', will be looked into.

2. THE HISTORY OF CHAPTER 6 OF THE BERLIN ACT

Conflicts caused by several colonial powers laying claim to the same overseas territory are as old as European expansion. Two different methods were developed for settling them: a priori demarcation and a posteriori demarcation.²

The most radical and most logical solution was adopted in 1494 in the Treaty of Tordesillas between Spain and Portugal, supplemented in 1529 by the Treaty of Saragossa. The world was divided into two spheres and each colonial power received one for its exclusive activity. So long as borders were respected there were no conflicts. The criterion was not actual possession of territories within the two spheres since for the most part the Europeans were unaware of their existence but an imaginary drawing of borders.

Generally speaking this solution was respected by the two powers. But as more interested parties appeared on the scene—France, England, and the Netherlands—

² With regard to the following cf. J. Fisch, *Die setzungen um den Status der überseeischen Gebiete vom 15. europäischen Expansion und das Völkerrecht: Die Auseinander-Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*, Stuttgart 1984, esp. ch. 2.

naturally enough they did not feel in any way bound by the treaty. The non-European world could have been divided up into five exclusive zones of activity. Geographically speaking, this would not have been at all easy. Spain and Portugal, in particular, were not interested in such a solution. Therefore, the new powers contested the 1494 solution and invoked another principle, that of effectiveness or actual possession. In colonial history, effectiveness has always been the weapon of the have-nots against the *beati possidentes*. The principle seemed fair: in place of the mere claim to regions which had not yet been discovered came the restriction to territories which were actually administered. Its implementation, however, was extremely difficult. What were the criteria for effective possession? If a power had settlements on two points of the coast that were some considerable distance from each other, did the territory lying between those two points also belong to that power? If someone controlled a coastal strip, did the entire interior also belong to him? It goes without saying that no comprehensively binding criteria could be applied to very largely unpenetrated territories. Because of their nature, the questions could not be answered in a legal-dogmatic way but only in a political way depending on the number of interested parties and the general extent of penetration of a territory. Conflicts were almost unavoidable as soon as several interested parties moved into the same territory and each one challenged the effectiveness of the others' possession. This likelihood of conflict was a direct result of the fact that demarcation was established on an *a posteriori* basis, after the penetration of the territory. Attempts to avoid this situation repeatedly led to the unfair but less conflict-provoking solution of *a priori* demarcation being chosen. Perhaps the most significant example of this is the principle of *uti possidetis* in Latin America. The Spanish colonial borders, often drawn up on paper arbitrarily and without knowledge of the area, were declared to be the borders of independent states regardless of the question whether the territory thereby demarcated was also actually penetrated and administered by the respective state.

The debate on occupations and protectorates at the Conference of Berlin should be seen against this background. The Conference opened with an onslaught by the have-nots against the seemingly unjustified claims of the established powers. The suggestion that the Conference deal with such questions came from Bismarck and was clearly anti-British in its aim. The events connected with Angra Pequena in South West Africa were an important catalyst. Here it took Britain a long time to treat German colonial ambition at all seriously. Instead Britain regarded the hinterland of Cape Colony as its sphere of influence which, if not actually taken possession of by Britain, was not to be annexed by any other state either. As early as May 1884, Bismarck intimated to Courcel, the French envoy in Berlin, that he wished to 'arriver à une entente générale sur les principes qui doivent régler la conduite des différents Gouvernements à l'égard des parties du globe qui ne sont point encore légalement occupées par une Puissance reconnue'.³ Bismarck was considerably more direct in a telegram in July to Münster, the German envoy in London:

We should, therefore, be anxious to learn why the right to colonize, which England exercises most extensively, should be denied to us. As regards Angra Pequena, in particular, Lord Derby has made enquiries of the Cape Town government whether there is any likelihood of the colony

³ Courcel's report to Ferry, 14 May 1884. *Ddf*, vol. 5, p. 289, no. 270.

deciding to annex Angra Pequena. He regards that territory, accordingly, as *res nullius*; you would have been all the more entitled to express your astonishment at the fact that, in response to Lord Sidmouth's interpellation, the right of German merchants to trade there has not been recognized unconditionally by the English government but rather the abnormality in international law of the Monroe Doctrine is, instead, applied on the African coast for the benefit of England.⁴

In August Bismarck was more specific in his views. A proposal could be made to France 'jointly to draft up an agreement by virtue of which free trade with coastal strips, which up to this time are not under European jurisdiction, would be guaranteed to signatories of the treaty'. Here the object of attack becomes even clearer: Bismarck believes 'that the exclusive English aspirations for absolute supremacy over the extra-European seas would place the other trading nations in a situation where they would be obliged to create a counterbalance to England's colonial supremacy by entering into association with one another'.⁵

For Bismarck, then, it was a question of securing the possibility of colonial acquisition or simply unimpeded trade for colonial newcomers and therefore first and foremost for Germany, as opposed to hypothetical or actual claims by Britain to vast territories which in no way whatsoever were effectively administered: 'Les Anglais sont portés à croire que toutes les parties du globe terrestre, qui n'ont pas été occupées déjà par une autre nation, leur appartiennent en vertu d'un droit de dévolution légale, et que c'est leur faire tort que de prendre place à côté d'eux sur les rivages des continents libres ou sur les mers.'⁶ According to Ferry, Bismarck wanted to prevent 'occupations fictives', 'prises de possession sur le papier'.⁷

In this, and most probably without being aware of it, Bismarck was in illustrious company. King François I of France is supposed to have said to the Spanish envoy in 1541 'that the sun gave warmth to him as well as to others, and he much desired to see Adam's will how he had partitioned the world'.⁸ And Elizabeth I of England protested in 1580: 'The Spaniards have no claim to property there except that they have established a few settlements and named rivers and capes. This donation of what does not belong to the donor and this imaginary right of property ought not to prevent other princes from carrying on commerce in those regions or establishing colonies there in places not inhabited by the Spaniards.'⁹

France reacted cautiously to the German proposals but on the whole agreed to them.¹⁰ On the one hand, it was interested in restricting British general claims and, on the other hand, of course, it had extensive interests in some territories, not all of which were very effectively occupied either. As a result of the Franco-German deliberations, the following form of words finally emerged in the invitations. The Conference was to deal with the 'définition des formalités à observer pour que des occupations nouvelles

⁴ 1 June 1884 in: J. Lepsius, A. Mendelsohn-Bartholdy, F. Thimme (eds.), *Die Große Politik der europäischen Kabinette 1871-1914: Sammlung der Diplomatischen Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes*, 40 vols., Berlin 1922-7, vol. 4, Berlin 1922, pp. 60 f., no. 743.

⁵ Bismarck to Hatzfeldt, 7 Aug. 1884, *Große Politik*, vol. 3, p. 414, no. 680.

⁶ Bismarck in a discussion with Courcel: Courcel to Ferry, 23 Sept. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, p. 424, no. 407.

⁷ Ferry's comments on the German proposals, Aug.

1884. *Ibid.*, pp. 379 f., no. 376.

⁸ H. P. Biggar, *A Collection of Documents Relating to Jacques Cartier and to the Sieur de Roberval*, Ottawa 1930, p. 290.

⁹ E. P. Cheyney, 'International Law under Queen Elizabeth', in *English Historical Review*, 20 (1905), pp. 659-72: p. 660.

¹⁰ For the preliminary discussions cf. S. Crowe, *The Berlin West African Conference 1884-1885*, New York 1942 (reprint Westport, Conn. 1970), pp. 176-80.

sur les côtes de l'Afrique soient considérés comme effectives'.¹¹ Granville reacted to this with an enquiry regarding the 'general principle' of such an arrangement.¹² In reply he was told that solely the application of the 'principles unanimously laid down by the jurists and judges of all lands, including England' were intended to be binding. Granville was satisfied with this.¹³

The principle was thus already accepted in outline; nor was it contested at the Conference: whosoever laid claim to territory in Africa had to make such claim felt. Due to the large number of interested parties this was quite natural. The problem lay in the details of the matter. What conditions had to be fulfilled before effectiveness of occupancy could be claimed? A German proposal based on agreement with France required 'une juridiction suffisante pour faire observer la paix, respecter les droits acquis et, le cas échéant, les conditions sous lesquelles la liberté du commerce et du transit aura été garantie'.¹⁴ After a long discussion, the following form of words was agreed: 'Assurer . . . l'existence d'une autorité suffisante pour faire respecter les droits acquis et, le cas échéant, la liberté du commerce et du transit dans les colonies où elle serait stipulée' (Article 35).¹⁵ This was a clear weakening of the original formulation and showed that the powers were not prepared to allow too many far-reaching stipulations to be imposed on them. But more important, finally, was the fact that both formulas (and also all other proposals) were so ambiguous that it would be difficult to prove their infringement. One could quite easily imagine a case where subjects of a European state sustained losses in a territory laid claim to by another power. But even then it would be very difficult to prove there was no sufficient authority in existence for the protection of acquired rights. Apart from that, the binding scope of application of the provisions was very limited: they applied solely to the African coastal territories which were still uncolonized. By 1885 these had become few in number. Malet, the British delegate, pointed this out and proposed extending the scope of the provisions to include the interior of the continent also. Courcel rejected this, however, for reasons which are not entirely clear.¹⁶ Probably it did not mean that France intended to evade these obligations since they were very loosely formulated in any case. More important seems to have been the desire to introduce the new provisions less as international treaty law but rather as principles whose voluntary observation would gradually achieve for them the status of international customary law.¹⁷ This was achieved by keeping the obligatory scope of application small and the optional large. In contrast to a direct codification, such a solution was also more in the tradition of the development of European international law.

¹¹ Circular of Ferry, 5 Oct. 1884. *Ddf*, vol. 5, p. 438, no. 419.

¹² Granville to Plessen, 8 Oct. 1884, in: E. Delbrück (ed.), *Das Staatsarchiv; Sammlung der officiellen Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Gegenwart*, 45 (1886), p. 28, no. 8585.

¹³ Granville's instructions to Malet, 7 Nov. 1884, *ibid.*, p. 41, no. 8593; cf. *ibid.*, p. 35, no. 8590.

¹⁴ Supplement to Minutes no. 7 of 8 Jan. 1885, in G. F. von Martens, *Nouveau Recueil général de traités*, second series, 35 vols., Göttingen, Leipzig 1876-1908, vol. 10, Göttingen 1885-6, pp. 333 f. The plan was later jointly introduced by Germany and France: Supplement 1 to Commission Report of 29 Jan. 1885, *ibid.*, p. 348.

¹⁵ With regard to the proceedings cf. Crowe, *Berlin*

West African Conference, p. 181-91. Minutes: Martens, *Nouveau Recueil*, pp. 331-9, pp. 341-8.

¹⁶ Commission Report of 29 Jan. 1885. Martens, *Nouveau Recueil*, p. 342. The territorial limitation was also stressed by Russia and Turkey: 8th Session of 31 Jan. 1885, *ibid.*, pp. 336 f.

¹⁷ The Commission pointed out that it was not a question of a 'doctrine uniforme', but merely of 'des règles uniformes': *ibid.*, 342; cf. Ferry's aim, 'qu'il sortît de cette délibération . . . quelques principes généraux, . . . qui pourraient ne pas constituer des conventions internationales proprement dites, mais qui s'imposeraient avec une autorité morale incontestable'. Aug. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, p. 380, no. 376.

A much more vigorous dispute occurred, however, over another matter connected with Chapter 6. In the course of the preliminaries to the Conference, the expression *occupations nouvelles*, which in particular was used in the invitations, had emerged as the actual subject of this chapter. It is clear from the German practice of colonial acquisition already in existence at that time that Bismarck at least was thinking here not simply of extensive territorial acquisitions, of the complete annexation of the colonial territory to the motherland. In Germany the word *Schutzherrschaft* ('protective control') was more commonly used and Bismarck especially was anxious that the obligations of the Reich should be as few as possible. Although he almost exclusively used the expression 'occupation' during the Conference, he meant by this every form of colonial acquisition. This demonstrated his inexperience in colonial matters. Ferry, on the other hand, as early as September, clearly differentiated between occupation and protectorate.¹⁸ The dogmatic difference between these two forms will be analysed in the next section. Here it suffices to state that a protectorate implies a situation of colonial power that is different from and essentially weaker than an occupation or an annexation. At the Conference itself, the differentiation slipped in automatically and almost unnoticed because in state practice it had long been applied in Africa.¹⁹ Nevertheless 'occupation or protectorate' was never officially substituted for 'occupation' as can be seen in the Act in which, as a rule, both forms are mentioned although in individual places and without good reason only occupation is mentioned, obviously because the adaption to the terminology already in use during the Conference had been forgotten.²⁰

The German proposal for Chapter 6 similarly referred to protectorate and occupation. The distinction gained in importance when Great Britain proposed limiting the requirement of effectiveness to occupations whereas notification alone was intended to be sufficient for protectorates.²¹ This proposal aimed right at the heart of Bismarck's intentions which were to prevent fictional and paper occupations. Whosoever set up a protectorate would not need to worry about the requirement of effectiveness. To conclude a treaty of protectorate with an African ruler would be sufficient to rout all other competitors from the field. One would not have to involve oneself any further in the territory. But this was not the only motive behind the British proposal. There are important constitutional distinctions between occupation and protectorate. The criteria of effectiveness required in Article 35 would have been particularly difficult to meet under the British interpretation of the protectorate. They would have involved more active intervention than the protectorate power was entitled to on the basis of the treaties. Great Britain would have had to change its entire protectorate doctrine. Moreover, to renounce the protectorate and instead practise direct annexation was impossible. It was not merely that annexations were much more costly; a colony also had a com-

¹⁸ Ferry to Courcel, 19 Sept. 1884. *Ddf*, vol. 5, p. 415, no. 402.

¹⁹ Already in the opening session Malet spoke of 'Puissances occupant ou protégeant . . . des territoires'. Martens, *Nouveau Recueil*, p. 205. And Launay, the Italian delegate, announced in the second session (19 Nov. 1884) the possible intention of his country 'de fonder à son tour quelque colonie ou d'exercer un protectorat sur certains territoires inexplorés'. *Ibid.*, p. 211.

²⁰ 'Droits de souveraineté ou de protectorat' etc. see Arts. 7, 8, 10, 11, 30, 31, 32. 'Droits de souveraineté' etc., no mention of protectorate, see Arts. 5, 15. 'Droits de souveraineté ou une influence' etc., see Arts. 6, 9. The preamble merely mentions 'prises de possession' and 'occupations'.

²¹ Commission report of 29 Jan. 1885. Martens, *Nouveau Recueil*, pp. 344 f.

pletely different status from a protectorate. For example, slavery had to be prohibited in British colonies but not in protectorates. Similarly English law automatically applied to a colony but not to a protectorate.²² In French colonial territories, on the other hand, the difference between real colonies and protectorates was much less pronounced, while in Germany comparable practice was only just developing.

The sharpest opposition to the British demand came from the French. The matter was decided after Germany sided with Great Britain with the result that France was faced with isolation. The requirement of notification was now all that was necessary for a protectorate.

French resentment was considerable and persisted up to the outbreak of the First World War.²³ Dogmatically speaking, the main aim originally connected with Chapter 6 was not achieved: taking territory into possession on paper was theoretically still possible. In practice, however, it was widely recognized that even a protectorate imposed at least minimal obligations on the protector. But this resentment was in itself based on a misunderstanding of the circumstances. Chapter 6 of the Berlin Act did not, in practice, become the basis for the partitioning of Africa and would not have become so even if the requirement of effectiveness had been made to cover protectorates also. From what moment the authority of a colonial power over a particular territory had to be considered effective could not be exactly defined in legal terms. First of all it depended on the scale of the competition. But where there is no competition there is also no interest in effectiveness. The greater the competition, however, the higher the requirements are forced up. At the same time, the risk of conflict is thereby increased. The amazingly peaceful implementation of the partitioning of Africa, respecting the relations between the colonial powers themselves, was due not to the application of Chapter 6 of the Berlin Act but to the large extent to which it was ignored in practice. Instead, in numerous treaties regarding spheres of influence and hinterlands, the proven expedient of a *priori* demarcation was resorted to.²⁴ Of course, existing possessions played a role in this and the treaties concluded with African rulers were frequently taken into consideration in the drawing up of borders.²⁵ But basically the fixing of borders depended not on effectiveness but on the general balance of power between the Europeans. As a rule one did not wait until occupancy expeditions clashed in the territory but instead sought to assign the borders in advance. The best counter-example is the Fashoda crisis where such an *a priori* arrangement had not been arrived at. The attempt to apply the effectiveness criterion instead resulted in conflict, especially since the extent of actual possessions was contested and difficult to establish. The two governments were able to come to an agreement only by disregarding the particular local circumstances.

From a political viewpoint Bismarck achieved his goal, which was to prevent a kind of British monopoly on colonial possession in vast parts of Africa. The legal outcome of those endeavours, Chapter 6 of the Act, however, was little more than a chimera in its effects and could not really be anything else. Territorial questions were and are resolved primarily through power relations between the competitors and not through

²² See W. Ross Johnston, *Sovereignty and Protection: A Study of British Jurisdictional Imperialism in the Late Nineteenth Century*, Durham, NC 1973, especially pp. 21, 50 ff., on the Berlin Conference: pp. 167-225.

²³ This applied in particular to literature on international law in which Britain was frequently the subject of controversy.

²⁴ The standard work on this is E. Hertslet, *The Map of Africa by Treaty*, 3 vols., 3rd edn. London 1909, reprint London 1967.

²⁵ See S. Touval, 'Treaties, Borders and the Partition of Africa', in *Journal of African History*, 7 (1966) pp. 279-93.

abstract criteria of effectiveness. Once the borders are fixed and recognized, no side can then refer to the non-fulfilment of criteria of effectiveness in order to notify new territorial claims. This held from Siberia to Amazonia and from the Sahara to Australia. Chapter 6 was an attempt to regulate genuinely political proceedings by law and as such was condemned to ineffectiveness right from the beginning. In spite of their political ineffectiveness, however, those provisions nevertheless provide the legal basis for the partitioning of Africa. They must now be explained.

3. *TERRA NULLIUS* AND SUBJECTS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW: OCCUPATION AND PROTECTORATE

The real subject of Chapter 6 of the Berlin Act is the acquisition of territory under international law by European powers in Africa or, in the case of protectorates, at least the acquisition of rights which enable the exclusion of other powers as competitors.

In international legal theory there are many, often contradictory, classifications of the acquisition of territory.²⁶ A basic distinction, however, is generally accepted: the distinction between original and derivative acquisition, depending on whether title previously lay in the hands of another subject of international law or not. Original acquisition means, accordingly, that a territory belonged to no one until the moment of acquisition, until which time, in terms of international law, it was ownerless, *terra nullius*. A well-known example is the discovery by someone of an uninhabited island which the discoverer takes into possession on behalf of his country. One could also think of the formation of new islands in the coastal area or of so-called accretions, such as the elevation of coasts or the precipitation of river deltas. Original acquisition is similarly spoken of where dereliction has already occurred, if the previous owner has given up his title: the territory thereby again becomes *terra nullius*.

Since most areas of the earth are inhabited and occupied by some state or another, it goes without saying that in state practice derivative acquisition of territory is much more important than original. Here, again, there are various classifications according to whether the exchange of territory is the result of treaty or unilateral declaration or is achieved by peaceful means or as the result of violence. Most often, the acquisition of territory is the result of wars. Then the territory falls into other hands through conquest. The normal case is cession, surrender by treaty, mostly a peace treaty. There can also be annexation by means of unilateral declaration, as when the whole territory of the enemy is incorporated into the victor's territory or where the loser unilaterally surrenders his title. Cession is of course also possible without war, for example, through purchase or gift.

3.1 *Occupation*

In international legal theory the terminology for these transactions is not uniform. Sometimes particular concepts have a broader, sometimes a narrower meaning. This

²⁶ The *modi* of territorial acquisition is dealt with in almost all textbooks with varying taxonomy. For a summary see E. Menzel 'Gebietserwerb', in: H.-J. Schlochauer (ed.), *Wörterbuch des Völkerrechts*, 3 vols., Berlin 1960-2, vol. 1, Berlin 1960, pp. 616-24. More

specialist studies: R. Y. Jennings, *The Acquisition of Territory in International Law*, Manchester 1963; Walter Schätzel, *Internationales Recht*, 3 vols., Bonn 1959, vol. 1: *Das Recht des völkerrechtlichen Gebietserwerbs*.

applies likewise to the concept of occupation. In the doctrine of international law this concept is not purely a *terminus technicus*. But as a rule, unless otherwise qualified, it refers—if it is used at all when referring to the acquisition of territory—to the taking into possession of land considered ownerless in international law. Beside this is the more specific *occupatio bellica* or belligerent occupation which in itself, however, conveys no title. This applies still more to the occupation of a territory in a quite unspecific sense, that is, its more or less forceful subjection to foreign control. In such a case a title is acquired only through cession or annexation.

Does 'occupation' in the Berlin Act always have the meaning of the acquisition of *terra nullius* in international law? The history of the Conference suggests otherwise. As has been shown above, Bismarck was obviously thinking of every possible form of territorial acquisition and not just of occupation in the strict sense of the word. Not only before but also during the Conference, linguistic usage was by no means uniform. Bismarck, though, spoke only of 'occupation' and 'prise de possession'. Once he even classified the territory of Angra Pequena as '*res nullius*'.²⁷ Granville, on the other hand, also spoke of 'annexations of unoccupied territory',²⁸ Courcel of 'annexions',²⁹ Malet of 'sovereignty',³⁰ whereas usually 'occupation' was used. Launay simply mentioned that Italy would perhaps like to 'fonder . . . quelque colonie';³¹ frequently at the Conference reference was simply made to the exercise of sovereignty or the rights of sovereignty by a European power. This led Alexandrowicz to put forward the thesis that 'the term occupation is here not used in the meaning of unilateral occupation but as occupation of territory acquired by any title in international law'.³² This interpretation is untenable. 'Occupation' had no such broad meaning in the theory of international law at that time. As a *modus* of acquisition it signified exclusively the taking into possession of ownerless territory. The delegates in Berlin must have known this since they had legal experts, a number of whom, such as Travers Twiss in the British delegation, were among the most renowned international lawyers of the period. The diplomats also were well informed. Next to 'occupation' the most frequently used term was 'taking into possession' (*prise de possession*). This refers even more unequivocally to ownerless territory in international law. Thus Article 34 (in contrast to the Chapter 6 heading which uses the term 'occupations nouvelles') speaks not of 'occupation' but of 'prendre possession'. What is meant by this becomes clear in Article 35 where 'territoires occupés' describes the same circumstances. Now and then 'free' or 'empty' territories were also spoken of.³³ Perhaps it was Ferry who most accurately described the basic view of all those involved. According to him, the prevailing interpretation was that 'un État peut acquérir par la seule prise de possession la souveraineté de territoires, soit inoccupés, soit appartenant à des tribus sauvages.'³⁴ In the end 'occupation' and 'prendre possession' were both retained without objection in the crucially

²⁷ Bismarck to Münster, 1 June 1884. *Große Politik*, vol. 4, p. 61, no. 743.

²⁸ Granville to Plessen, 8 Oct. 1884. *Staatsarchiv*, vol. 45, p. 29, no. 8586.

²⁹ Courcel to Ferry, 26 Aug. 1884. *Ddf*, vol. 5, p. 382, no. 377.

³⁰ Malet to Granville, 21 Feb. 1885. *Staatsarchiv*, vol. 45, p. 246, no. 8607.

³¹ Minutes of the 2nd Session, 19 Nov. 1884. Martens, *Nouveau Recueil*, p. 211.

³² C. H. Alexandrowicz, *The European-African Confrontation: A Study in Treaty Making*, Leiden 1973, p. 4, also p. 46.

³³ e.g. Hatzfeldt to Bismarck, 11 Aug. 1884: 'Concerning free territory'. *Große Politik*, vol. 3, p. 414, no. 681. Ferry's instructions to Courcel, 8 Nov. 1884: 'L'occupation des territoires vacants sur le littoral africain.' *Staatsarchiv*, vol. 45, p. 46, no. 8593.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

important Chapter 6 of the General Act. A comparison with Europe shows that not just any form of territorial acquisition was meant by this. Here no one would have thought of categorizing acquisition by conquest, cession, or division of states as occupations. In the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-1, Germany had militarily occupied Alsace-Lorraine as well as other regions of France. However, it acquired Alsace-Lorraine by cession in the peace treaty. Even the Polish partitions, for example, had never been regarded as occupations but at most as annexations. Lastly, the long discussions before and during the Conference of Berlin show that the expression 'occupation' did not just creep into usage unnoticed. People knew what they were doing. In so far as it was not already under European dominion, Africa was considered a *terra nullius*. For that reason, original and not derivative forms of acquisition of territory were spoken of. Each power that treated Africa as a *terra nullius* henceforth had the blessing of the Berlin Act.

Of course it is also easy to see why this conclusion is difficult to accept. Around 1885 it was well known in Europe that Africa was not a *terra nullius* in the sense that an uninhabited island is a *terra nullius*. On the contrary, everywhere it was more or less densely populated by peoples who were organized into various political systems. This problem was eliminated by a theory which appeared at about the time of the Conference of Berlin, and very quickly thereafter received widespread currency. It shows that 'occupation' has to be interpreted as taking into possession of *terra nullius*.³⁵ The plausible premiss of this theory is that a territory is ownerless in international law as long as it belongs to no subject of international law in the same way that it is ownerless in civil law as long as no one has a right of property over it. The mere fact of settlement is still no protection against ownerlessness in international law. According to this theory, subjects of international law are only those states who exercise all rights of sovereignty and perform state functions in the same way as modern European states. In Africa there are more or less distinct forms of political organization. But these are not sufficient to make it possible to speak of a real state. Therefore they are not subjects of international law and their territory is ownerless in international law. Any recognized subject of international law can occupy Africa as a *terra nullius*.

From basic assumptions which to some extent seemed obvious, a theory was born which gave the right to members of the international community of states, that is to say essentially the European and American states, to occupy as they pleased all the territories of the earth which belonged to none of them. What was the origin of such an outcome which was as unexpected as it was unjust? To find out we must look more closely at the history of the legal concept of occupation. It originated in Roman civil law in which it referred to the acquisition of ownerless objects and, if need be, ownerless land also. The first to find such objects can take possession of them and so becomes legal owner.³⁶ In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this concept was inscribed in international law: whosoever discovers an ownerless territory can take possession of it for himself or for his country, no longer now in a civil law sense but for the purposes of constitutional or international law. He acquires rights of sovereignty over it. Instead of *dominium* there is *imperium*.

Once this step had been taken it was only a small matter to extend this legal concept to inhabited territory in which no rights of sovereignty were exercised. But precisely

³⁵ For more precise details with examples, see Fisch, *Europäische Expansion*, pp. 284-348, esp. 297 ff.

³⁶ Cf. M. Kaser, *Das römische Privatrecht*, 2 vols., Munich 1971-5, vol. 1, pp. 245-6, vol. 2, pp. 288-9.

here lay the weak spot. Occupation in civil law bestows rights of possession over an object; it subjects it to the power of disposal of the acquirer. As a rule, nobody takes offence at this since most agree that things and even animals are intended for the profit and use of mankind. Similarly, occupation in international law confers rights of sovereignty, the constitutional power of disposal over a territory. Here it might also be said that the world was intended as a place to be politically organized, covered with states by mankind. If the territory is uninhabited then the analogy still holds. If, on the other hand, it is inhabited, then the power of disposal in civil law over things becomes the power of disposal in public law over people, that is, sovereign authority. For rights of sovereignty are primarily rights over people and not over things. Nineteenth-century theoreticians were absolutely right in seeing that in many African countries not all the rights of sovereignty were exercised that were exercised in European countries. What they did not see was that unexercised rights over people are not ownerless but that the freedoms of the people concerned correspond to them. If no one has the right to give me orders then it is difficult to speak of an ownerless right over me. Rather I enjoy the freedom of not being subject to orders. A person who does not have someone over him is not really an ownerless person, in any case not in the sense of an ownerless object. He is a free person. The same applies to communities of people, however they are politically organized. That is also why occupation in civil law related only to things and not to people—unless these people were regarded and treated as objects, in other words, as slaves. Similarly, in international law the theory of occupation reduces the inhabitants of ostensibly ownerless territories to things, thus treating them as slaves.

This central weakness in the theory went unnoticed in the late nineteenth century both by politicians and the teachers of international law. In any case there is nothing to suggest an adequate awareness. Otherwise their attitude could be accounted for only in terms of an almost unimaginable cynicism on their part. Before examining the question why both theory and politics were equally blind in this respect, we must look at the second important concept in Chapter 6.

3.2. *The protectorate*

The protectorate is a familiar institution in international law both in theory and in state practice.³⁷ According to the generally prevailing interpretation, a weaker state surrenders its external sovereignty, in particular its foreign policy and defence, to a stronger state which assumes the obligation to protect it externally. Internal sovereignty, on the other hand, remains within the control of the protected state. Of course, various divisions of jurisdiction are possible here. A stronger protector, especially, can easily assume certain rights of intervention in the internal affairs of the protected state. The decisive feature is the division of the sovereignty of the protected state which remains a subject of international law even though its capacity is restricted. This legal concept has a long tradition in Europe and still exists to this day. Monaco, for example, is a French protectorate.

In contrast to occupation, the protectorate is, accordingly, not a way of acquiring territory since the protector does not in international law acquire the title over the

³⁷ Most textbooks on international law deal with this at least briefly. For specialist literature see under section 5.

territory of the protected state. Besides, occupation is a process whereas the protectorate is a condition which, as a rule, results from the conclusion of a treaty.

The parallel positions of occupation and protectorate in the Berlin Act thus raise considerable problems. The wording employed creates the impression that the European powers, depending on their whim, could occupy or set up protectorates in Africa. But these possibilities mutually exclude each other by their premisses. Only stateless territory which is still not subject to any sovereignty can be occupied while a protectorate presupposes an existing state—otherwise no sovereignty can be shared between it and its protector. Thus, as far as a protectorate is concerned, Africa cannot be a *terra nullius*. 'You do not protect *terra nullius*', as a judge at the International Court of Justice remarked in 1979.³⁸ It is a contradiction in terms. Did the Berlin Conference regard Africa as *terra nullius* (as a precondition for occupation) or as occupied by subjects of international law (as a precondition for protectorate)? A differentiation between politically more developed territories and less developed territories would be conceivable. Neither the General Act itself, nor the proceedings give any indication of this. Another possible solution is to understand by protectorate something other than the traditional theory. This was actually attempted later, as will be shown. At least the original Franco-German proposal to treat occupation and protectorate absolutely equally with regard to the criteria of effectiveness allows for the possibility of such an identification. Nevertheless, it must be asked why two forms of acquisition of titles are spoken of at all. Depending on the circumstances, either occupation or protectorate would have sufficed. Duplication was not simply a linguistic pleonasm but was the result of two different forms of state practice which were not so easy to reduce to a single form.³⁹ Thus the British resistance to their being equated becomes understandable. At the Conference various delegates did insist that the criteria for effectiveness should be uniform. But no one claimed that occupation and protectorate were one and the same thing.

Thus the theoretical and dogmatic contradiction in Chapter 6 cannot be eliminated. This was hardly a problem however, since in actual practice it was meaningless: one territory could be occupied as a *terra nullius* and, at the same time, the occupying power could sign treaties of protectorate in another territory.

It is important to establish here that occupation in the sense of the taking into possession of *terra nullius* actually played an extremely minor part in the colonial powers' acquisition of territory in Africa.⁴⁰ Only very few territories were simply taken possession of.⁴¹ Usually they were of little importance since they were very thinly populated. In a normal case, the acquisition of titles was not original but derivative. In this, the treaty of protectorate played a decisive role. The European power acquired external sovereignty while the African treaty partner forfeited the right to practise an independent foreign policy, at least in so far as it affected the Europeans, but retained

³⁸ Judge Dillard in his separate opinion in the Court's Advisory Opinion on Western Sahara, in *International Court of Justice: Reports of Judgements, Advisory Opinions and Orders*, Leiden 1975, p. 124.

³⁹ Ferry was perfectly aware of this already in September: see n. 18 above.

⁴⁰ Alexandrowicz also points this out, *Confrontation*, pp. 12–13. The taking into possession which he quotes

from Hertslet, *Map of Africa*, vol. 1, p. 52–3 is in this case actually a cession.

⁴¹ A well known South African example is mentioned in the Walvis Bay arbitration between Great Britain and Germany of 23 May 1911. Martens, *Nouveau Recueil*, 3rd series, vol. 6, Leipzig 1912, pp. 398, 406, 424. See also *ibid.* 2nd series, vol. 11, Göttingen 1887, pp. 462 f.

full autonomy over internal affairs. At the same time, there were cessions where territories were bought or had to be surrendered after wars, and sometimes the Europeans would annex the enemy's entire territory as a result of a war.⁴²

Thus practical politics cared very little about theoretical dogma. For its purposes Africa was not a *terra nullius* but a territory which was occupied by subjects of international law with whom one basically had to deal in the same way as with European countries.⁴³ If one had insisted on treating Africa as a *terra nullius* then it would have quickly become clear that its status of ownerlessness was a fiction. Taking possession of genuinely ownerless, uninhabited territory is, as a rule, relatively unproblematic since, apart from nature, no one offers resistance. In inhabited territory, however, occupation can easily lead to resistance. Thus a simple taking into possession turns into a conquest and therefore *de facto* once again a derivative acquisition of territory. The importance of treaties of protectorate shows that the Europeans in Africa did not proceed as blind dogmatists. On the contrary, they knew how to adjust to reality. This means that they had to take the African states into account. At least it was cheaper to conclude treaties of protectorate at first and then perhaps later be in a position to acquire extra rights than to attempt an occupation which, in all probability, would lead to costly clashes. The theoretical contradiction between occupation and protectorate could have been settled in practice only at the cost of enormous difficulties whereas the chosen solution allowed a free hand to practical politics. Even those who wanted to treat protectorates as occupations in Chapter 6 were aware of this reality and also of the reality of the sovereignty of African states. In the original draft the criteria of effectiveness spoke of an 'obligation d'établir et de maintenir . . . une juridiction suffisante'.⁴⁴ Courcel suggested instead: 'Assurer l'existence d'une autorité suffisante,' because 'cette dernière forme, en effet, prêterait à supposer que lors de toute occupation nouvelle, il y aura toujours des innovations organiques à introduire pour la distribution de la justice, tandis que, peut-être, dans certaines régions, les institutions existantes paraîtront suffire et seront simplement conservées.'⁴⁵

As far as the Africans' legal status was concerned, the colonial powers were anything but dogmatic among themselves and outside the Conference of Berlin. Treaties with African leaders and states had always been recognized between the colonial powers. This was acknowledged in connection with the Conference. In various declarations which led to its recognition by the individual states, the International Congo Association invoked the fact that 'en vertu de traités conclus avec les souverains légitimes . . . il lui a été cédé un territoire . . .'⁴⁶ In other cases, however, claim was omitted.⁴⁷ It was, accordingly, possible but not necessary. This attitude did not change

⁴² For general reference to treaty practice cf. in addition Alexandrowicz, *Confrontation*, and id., 'The Afro-Asian World and the Law of Nations (Historical Aspects)', in *Recueil des Cours*, 123 (The Hague 1968-), pp. 121-214, esp. pp. 169 ff.; C. Vanderlinden, 'Les Titres juridiques des européens à l'occupation du sol africain avant 1876', in *Académie Royale des Sciences d'Outre Mer: La Conférence de Géographie 1876, Recueil d'études*, Brussels 1976, pp. 183-255; Touval, 'Treaties'; J. Fisch, *Krieg und Frieden im Friedensvertrag*, Stuttgart 1979, pp. 548-609.

⁴³ cf. Johnston, *Sovereignty*, p. 161. In 1886 British

legal experts still considered African political systems as unreservedly sovereign.

⁴⁴ Martens, *Nouveau Recueil*, p. 333.

⁴⁵ Commission Report of 29 Jan. 1885. *Ibid.*, p. 345.

⁴⁶ Exchange of declarations between the United States and the Congo Association, 22 Apr. 1884. Martens, *Nouveau Recueil*, p. 366. Similarly with Britain, 16 Dec. 1884, *ibid.*, p. 368 and Belgium, 23 Feb. 1885, *ibid.*, p. 383.

⁴⁷ This applied to the treaties of recognition with all other countries: *ibid.*, pp. 367-83.

after the Berlin Conference. Of course, such treaties could, in some cases, be disputed; it was, for example, objected that the African partner had no authority to sign, force had been used, alcohol had played a role, the provisions had not been properly explained to the Africans or wrongly translated, and so on.⁴⁸ Often this may have been the case. In the situation under consideration, however, the point is that such controversies demonstrate that the treaties, which after all also involved obligations on the European side, were basically acknowledged as titles against other Europeans.⁴⁹ Under the premiss that Africa was a *terra nullius* in international law, any treaty, regardless of the circumstances in which it was signed, would have been worthless. Thus the African signatories of the treaty would not have been subjects of international law, the treaties would not have been treaties in international law, and no European state would have been obliged to recognize treaties concluded by other states.

The Berlin Act was quite pragmatical in this respect. The practice which had been adopted for many years was sanctioned by mention of the protectorate. Thus one could rephrase the question: why did Chapter 6 speak of occupation at all since in practice its meaning was in fact negligible? The bigger powers, at least, knew in 1884-5 that African territories were acquired not by crude seizures but by skilful diplomacy, by signing treaties and, where necessary, by war. Occupation was not much more than a fiction.

3.3. *The ideology of justification*

The mention of occupation in Chapter 6 did not really refer to actual practice. Its significance was ideological: it served to justify the Europeans' course of action. Strictly speaking, the colonial acquisition of Africa needed no justification. The Europeans had the necessary strength and, even within Europe, the right of conquest was widely accepted both in theory and state practice. But the possession of a right is still not automatically synonymous with justifying extensive recourse to that right. In Europe, too, any power was entitled to conquer the entire continent or to subjugate it in some other way. It was understood, however, that there should be proper justification for this. Similarly, the Europeans needed to justify their activities in Africa. And it was the task of the theory which defined Africa as *terra nullius* to provide that justification. For that reason alone the mention of occupation was unavoidable in the Berlin Act. The Europeans constantly had to be able to see their activities as the occupation of *terra nullius* even when, in reality, it was an ordinary matter of derivative acquisition of territory or the setting up of a protectorate. Otherwise there would suddenly have been no other more profound justification which might also be understood as a kind of refuge from the Europeans' own sense of justice. That is why both elements in Chapter 6 were of equal importance: one had to have the possibility of regarding one's actions as occupation but at the same time also be able to pursue them by way of the setting up of a protectorate or derivative acquisition of territory. This dualism in the Berlin Act never became a theme of the Conference but formed one of its apparently self-evident assumptions.

⁴⁸ In connection with this question cf. the literature mentioned in n. 42 above. For details of conclusions of treaties see H. Brunschwig, *Brazza Explorateur: Les Traités Makoko 1880-1882*, Paris 1972, pp. 65 f., 77 f. C.

Coquilhat, *Sur le Haut-Congo*, Paris 1888, pp. 89-95. Also the article by Mumbanza mwa Bawele in this volume.

⁴⁹ For a consideration of treaties involving drawing up of borders cf. Touval, 'Treaties', pp. 280, 288 f.

This leads back to the question of why international lawyers and diplomats accepted these views without noticing that they were thereby treating people like objects. First of all, however, a more far-reaching objection must be dealt with. After the Conference, it was often stated that the rights of the African tribes and states had been comprehensively recognized.⁵⁰ In fact, there was unanimity over the decision to regard the Sultan of Zanzibar as a sovereign in the European sense of the word. This became clear when Zanzibar's rights in the eastern Congo basin were explicitly respected,⁵¹ and was further reinforced when Zanzibar signed the Berlin Act.⁵² It was also explicitly stressed that in the event of other equivalent states in Africa being 'discovered', they too had to be similarly treated.⁵³ This was the pragmatic attitude of the Conference. If it proved necessary to recognize an African state as having equal rights, then dogmatic provisions were not to interfere in this. This procedure shows also that the colonial powers retained the freedom to act as they pleased. Whether a state was considered a subject of international law depended on whether the European states and America recognized it. It goes without saying that the colonial powers did not want to discover many such states.

Another episode of the Conference is often quoted to show the allegedly universal recognition of the rights of the African states. In the Committee report on free trade it was said that for the 'populations indigènes, . . . qui, pour la plupart, ne doivent pas sans doute être considérées comme se trouvant en dehors de la communauté du droit des gens, mais qui dans l'état présent des choses ne sont guère aptes à défendre elles-mêmes leurs intérêts, la Conférence a dû assumer le rôle d'un tuteur officieux'.⁵⁴ Certainly, most of these 'populations' are not excluded from the international community of states. But neither are they members of it. They are not its subjects but its objects. Their relationship to the international community of states arises not from admission as members but by their becoming constituents of another member by occupation. The expression 'tuteur officieux' removes all doubt. On the other hand, no one is debarred from recognizing African states. But the Conference gave no details about this and certainly adopted no provisions.

Later, this attitude was further reinforced. Kasson, the American delegate, again and again took a strong line during the Conference in support of the Africans. As long as his comments and demands did not contradict the prevailing paternalism, which held that the Africans should be well treated within the framework of presupposed control and civilized in so far as it was possible, Kasson was benevolently heard.⁵⁵ In the concluding discussion of Chapter 6, however, he introduced a completely different proposal:

Le droit international moderne suit fermement une voie que mène à la reconnaissance du droit des races indigènes de disposer librement d'elles-mêmes et de leur sol héréditaire. Conformément à ce principe, mon Gouvernement se rallierait volontiers à une règle plus étendue et basée sur un principe qui viserait le consentement volontaire des indigènes dont le pays est pris en possession, dans tous les cas où ils n'auraient pas provoqué l'acte agressif.

⁵⁰ Cf. Fisch, *Europäische Expansion*, pp. 321-4.

⁵¹ Cf. in the discussion on the eastwards extension of the Congo Basin e.g. Martens, *Nouveau Recueil*, pp. 220, 321-3.

⁵² Alexandrowicz, *Confrontation*, p. 74; F. Despagne,

Essai sur le Protectorat: Étude de droit international, Paris 1896, p. 219.

⁵³ 6th session of 22 Dec. 1884. Martens, *Nouveau Recueil*, pp. 321-3.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 254.

⁵⁵ e.g. *ibid.*, pp. 214, 276, 288, 309-11, 323, 359 f.

The reaction to this was stunned silence. The president, Busch, a German, stated diplomatically that the proposal 'touche à des questions délicates sur lesquelles la Conférence ne saurait guère exprimer d'opinion'. No one spoke and the suggestion was referred to the minutes.⁵⁶

At first sight the reaction was astonishing, since, after all, Kasson was describing only what was already common practice. Had not hundreds of treaties been signed with African leaders in these years? What was true in practice could not, however, be accepted as a stipulation. As a rule, all powers did precisely what Kasson was proposing. But they wanted to do it of their own free will and not because they were required to do so. If the proposal had been accepted then the doctrine of Africa's ownerlessness would no longer have been valid: no one would have the right simply to occupy a territory unless first provoked by the Africans. Then it would have been necessary to justify European action in quite another way.

But what was the supposed justification? For that we must return to the basic idea of occupation, the taking into possession of ownerless objects. This presupposes a condition that is so obvious that it is never even mentioned: that objects and goods of this earth are intended for the profit and use of mankind. The doctrine of occupation is based on a modified form of this concept: that the earth is intended for occupation by political communities capable of associating with one another in a humane way of guaranteeing specific rights, in particular, individual rights of freedom. The supposition is that only modern states which conform to the European pattern are able to do this. According to this concept, the state and civilization are in symbiosis. The modern state is the result of civilization and wherever there are no sovereign states in the European sense, there is conversely no civilization. The state, in the words of Westlake, becomes the criterion for civilization.⁵⁷

It should now be possible, at least subjectively, to understand why freedom was sacrificed to civilization in the definition of Africa as an ownerless territory, why a subject of international law was authorized to occupy African territories in disregard of the freedom of the inhabitants. Civilization was the highest value, that alone could bring about a worldwide community of individuals and states.⁵⁸ In cases of doubt one was duty bound to choose civilizing oneself over the freedom of remaining uncivilized since lack of civilization was seen as a danger to human association.

The content of such civilization is quite another matter. It was always worldwide in character. In other respects, however, it combined the most various concepts: humanitarian goals and free association and, above all, of course, economic relations enabling the possibility of free trade. Analysis of the constituents of the concept of civilization is not, however, our concern here. We are interested only in its role as a basic justification of the doctrine of occupation.

At the end of this critical discussion of the theory of occupation, an important objection must at least be mentioned. Could the partitioning of Africa by the Europeans in 1885 have been prevented after its economic penetration had advanced

⁵⁶ 8th session of 31 Jan. 1885, *ibid.*, pp. 335-6. Kasson already had indirectly made his view plain during the second session when, in relation to the Congo Basin, he spoke of 'souverains indigènes, les seules autorités existant dans ces régions et disposant de la souveraineté

sur les territoires et les peuples'. *Ibid.*, p. 214.

⁵⁷ J. Westlake, 'Chapters on the Principles of International Law', in *id.*, *Collected Papers on Public International Law*, ed. L. Oppenheim, Cambridge 1914, pp. 143-5.

⁵⁸ Cf. Fisch, *Europäische Expansion*, pp. 291-5.

so far? After all, it might be argued, the colonial powers now had to defend the Africans from the encroachments of individual Europeans. If the European powers were really in a position to offer such protection, then they must also have basically been able to prevent their subjects from settling in these regions. But that the Europeans had the right economically to penetrate the entire world was an axiom that went unchallenged, especially since this penetration was thought ultimately to serve the cause of civilization. If the Africans were incapable of coping with the consequences, then that was their own problem. But even if the partitioning of Africa by the Europeans was the only possible way of protecting the Africans from the encroachments of individual Europeans, even then one would still not have had to invoke the theory of the alleged ownerlessness of Africa. It would have been sufficient to invoke the direct interests of the Africans instead of resorting to various arguments about civilization. The very form of this justification arouses the suspicion that it was not so easy to clothe the matter with legitimacy.

4. VAIN ATTEMPTS AT SYSTEMATIZATION: THE INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL LAW 1888

The theoretical contradiction in Chapter 6 of the Berlin Act was particularly annoying for international lawyers. It regarded Africa as a *terra nullius* liable to occupation and, at the same time, as a territory inhabited by subjects of international law with whom treaties of protectorate could be concluded. The situation was hardly less annoying to anyone interested in standardizing practice. The criteria of effectiveness of Article 35 could always be circumvented by setting up a protectorate.

This explains why the renowned Institute for International Law, to which the most important specialists in international law of that time belonged, set up a committee in 1885 for the purpose of 'Examen de la théorie de la conférence de Berlin de 1885, sur l'occupation des territoires'.⁵⁹ The result was two competing proposals for improving the provisions of the Berlin Act, which were dealt with at the 1888 session.⁶⁰

Martitz, a German, began his draft with a definition: 'Est considérée comme *territorium nullius* toute région qui ne se trouve pas effectivement sous la souveraineté ou sous le protectorat d'un des États qui forment la communauté du droit des gens, peu importe que cette région soit, ou non, habitée.'⁶¹

Here the theory according to which Africa was a *terra nullius* was very much more clearly expressed than in the Berlin Act. On the other hand, the difference between occupation and protectorate was retained, also as regards the criteria of effectiveness. But Martitz made it clear that he regarded the protectorate fundamentally as a veiled occupation since he explicitly described it as 'occupation à titre de protectorat'⁶² without, however, requiring effectiveness. Thus, as compared with the Berlin Act, the proposal afforded no development of the law apart from clearly revealing the theory of Africa as a *terra nullius*. Nobody was in favour of this and Martitz's draft was withdrawn after a short debate.

⁵⁹ *Institut de droit international*, Annuaire 9 (1887-8), pp. 173-204.
p. 243.

⁶¹ Art. 1 id., Annuaire 9, p. 247; Annuaire 10, p. 177.

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 243-55 and Annuaire 10 (1888-9),
⁶² Art. 6 id., Annuaire 9, p. 249.

The competing proposal was made by Engelhardt, the legal expert of the French delegation at the Berlin Conference. As a result of the discussion of Martitz's draft, Engelhardt proposed the following resolution: 'L'Institut, considérant qu'en fait la plupart des prises de possession effectuées depuis un certain temps, sur le continent d'Afrique, ont pour base des arrangements avec les chefs indigènes, émet le vœu que cette pratique se généralise et devienne la règle des occupations en pays non civilisés.'⁶³ Formally speaking, this was less stringent than Martitz's proposal, though its contents were just as unyielding. The treaties with African leaders were not only expressly mentioned but were actually to be made the rule. Basically, however, they were not genuine treaties at all. They simply formed the 'base' for the 'prise de possession'. The basis for this view is discussed in the next section. The proposal contained two refinements on Chapter 6: treaties were not only possible but desirable (though their conclusion was not obligatory, as Kasson had required at the Conference) and they took the form of veiled occupations.

This proposal was also rejected. The Institute was unable to agree with any proposal addressed to the politicians. The reason for this is easy to see. The advantage of Chapter 6 of the Berlin Act lay precisely in its flexibility, in the freedom it allowed to the states. Africa could be treated as a *terra nullius*; but if one wished to do so, one could also treat the African rulers like European sovereigns. The provisions submitted to the Institute would only have limited this freedom without introducing any really new legal elements. No country was interested in this. The lawyers' need to systematize had to yield to the European countries' need of as much freedom of action as possible. The practical strength of Chapter 6 lay precisely in its unspecificness and theoretical contradictoriness. It could not be improved, but only repealed. Then European aims would also have to be changed. Articles 34 and 35 needed no revising as a basis for the partitioning of Africa. On the other hand, should one wish to prevent Africa from being treated as a *terra nullius*, then Chapter 6 would have to be deleted and not replaced—existing European international law contained sufficient provisions for transactions on a basis of equality between subjects of international law. Such views were not in demand around 1888. International legal theory was moving in a quite different direction as will now be shown.

5. THE COLONIAL PROTECTORATE OR INSTITUTIONALIZED INFRINGEMENT OF TREATIES

The treaty of protectorate was probably the most important instrument for the establishment of the Europeans in Africa in the second half of the nineteenth century. However, the European-African relationship did not, in the longer term, bear the stamp of the protectorate, at least not the classical protectorate in the sense of the sharing out of internal and external sovereignty. If one considers Africa following the consolidation of European control around the eve of the First World War, then extensive parts of the continent were directly administered and ruled by the colonial powers. Even where methods of indirect rule were used, the colonial power as a rule

⁶³ *id.*, *Annuaire* 10, pp. 181-2.

had more extensive rights of intervention in internal affairs than protectorate proper would have granted. Real protectorates had become the exception. And the euphemistic terminology in frequent use could not disguise this. Thus the German territories were still called *Schutzgebiete* (protected territories) although they no longer had anything in common with protectorates.

How did this decline of the protectorate occur?⁶⁴ Sometimes the colonial power was able to implement a revision of the treaty whereby it received more rights, generally of intervention and control in internal matters. The new treaty might result from pressure on the protected state by the colonial power or by African neighbours. Such a process nevertheless presupposed a relatively strong position on the part of African signatories, that they should be honoured with the conclusion of a new treaty at all.

Another more radical method was the annulling of treaties as a result of rebellions or wars. The colonial power placed the blame on the African side for having broken the existing treaties.⁶⁵

The most important method, however, became what could euphemistically be called gradual administrative abolition, or at least limitation, of the treaties or, more directly, non-observance by the colonial power, in other words, treaty breaking. The balance of power favoured such conduct, especially in territories with small political units. As soon as the colonial power had so much as set up a rudimentary military organization, a minor village chief or a village community was no longer in a position to maintain disputed treaty rights. And it was precisely in those territories where there had been transactions with a large number of minor sovereigns that the treaties proved to be obstacles to the setting up of an extensive administration. State necessity and the general interest provided the excuse for non-observance of the treaties. Thus, in 1886, Rosebery informed King Ja Ja of Opobo, on the coast of the Niger, that Britain's aim was

the promotion of the welfare of the natives of all those territories, taken as a whole, by insuring the peaceful development of trade, and by facilitating their intercourse with Europeans. It is not to be permitted that any Chief who may happen to occupy a territory on the coast should obstruct this policy in order to benefit himself.⁶⁶

They may have been obvious reasons but in constitutional terms and according to the rule of law they did not justify the breaking of treaties.

The connection with the balance of power was sometimes more clearly defined. Thus a memorandum on German South West Africa looking back from 1904 expressed the opinion: 'It was only with the growth in German resources for exercising power that it was possible to begin to apply the treaties in the way that seemed necessary in the interests of profitable economic and political development of the country.'⁶⁷

The political-economic interest was clear. For the expanding colonial power the treaties represented fetters that it had to shake off if possible. But the legal basis for this was at least questionable. In this instance, international legal theory came to the aid of

⁶⁴ With regard to the following cf. Alexandrowicz, *Confrontation*, esp. pp. 62-83.

⁶⁵ Particularly pronounced following the Herero and Nama rebellion in German South West Africa (1904-7). According to H. Hesse, *Die Schutzverträge in Südwestafrika: Ein Beitrag zur rechtsgeschichtlichen und politischen Entwicklung*

des Schutzgebietes, Berlin 1905, p. 159, 'sind die Schutzverträge durch die Eingeborenen mit dem Beginne des Aufstandes gebrochen und damit für uns nicht mehr bindend'.

⁶⁶ Johnston, *Sovereignty*, p. 326.

⁶⁷ Quoted in Hesse, *Schutzverträge*, p. 6.

practice with a doctrine whose apologetic character is of exceptional unequivocalness, even in jurisprudence.

Until the Berlin Conference the protectorate had been of little interest in legal doctrine. Although it was briefly referred to in textbooks, it was rarely a subject for special discussion. From 1885 until about 1910, on the other hand, a veritable flood of literature about protectorates appeared, particularly in Germany and even more so in France.⁶⁸

The reason was the difficulty of defining the relationship between occupation and protectorate in the Berlin Act. The tendency was to identify the protectorate with occupation, or at least to approximate the former to the latter. It had to be established that the protectorate was basically an occupation.

The main result was the doctrine of the colonial protectorate.⁶⁹ The basis for this was the theory which formed the background to Chapter 6 of the Berlin Act and which once again proved its potential for legitimization. According to this theory, Africa was *terra nullius* in international law. Nevertheless, European states concluded treaties with African leaders. The contradiction could be resolved in two ways. Either Africa was not a *terra nullius* and the treaty signatories were therefore genuine subjects of international law, or the treaties were not genuine treaties in international law. The theory of the colonial protectorate chose this second variant. Since the treaty signatories were not subjects of international law, the treaties of protectorate were not valid in international law. Did this mean they had no validity whatsoever and were not binding on the signatories? The Europeans prudently were wary of such a conclusion since, as a rule, they were far more favoured by the treaties than the Africans. However, the treaties were not valid in international law, merely obligatory in a moral sense. They therefore had to be honoured. If they were not honoured, however, it was of no consequence in international law. The colonial power in question had not thereby infringed any international obligations; the non-observance was merely an internal matter for that state. Of course, similar rights might have been demanded for the Africans who might equally and with impunity have reneged on their obligations. This danger was eliminated by means of another construction. The African side was redefined and transformed from partner and subject into object. Since it was not a subject of international law, it could not renounce its external sovereignty either. This revealed the sophistry and remoteness from reality of the argumentation. To any tolerably impartial observer it was clear that the African states, however 'primitive' in European eyes, at least recognized no superior authority over them and therefore fulfilled the main criterion for external sovereignty. According to this interpretation, the colonial power acquired its rights of sovereignty over the protectorate territory not by means of treaty but by occupation. Thus the colonial power received no concessions but merely took what belonged to it. This procedure was consequently called, with a *contradictio in*

⁶⁸ This literature cannot even be approximately explained. For a new and comprehensive treatment see A. M. Kamanda, 'A Study of the Legal Status of Protectorates in Public International Law', Diss. Geneva 1961. With regard to Great Britain cf. Johnston, *Sovereignty*; H. Jenkyns, *British Rule and Jurisdiction Beyond the Seas*, Oxford 1902. A. Lyall, 'Frontiers and Protectorates', in *Nineteenth Century*, 30 (1891),

pp. 312-28. More bibliogr. detail in Fisch, *Europäische Expansion*, pp. 284-379, esp. 332 ff. and 377 ff.

⁶⁹ The expression 'protectorat colonial', 'colonial protectorate' must have come into existence shortly after the Berlin Conference. A more precise assignment to an author is hardly possible on account of the abundance of literature appearing almost all at the same time.

adjecto, 'occupation à titre de protectorat'.⁷⁰ It was understandably very difficult for the authors to describe it clearly. The actual treaties, which had been signed without provisos, whose numbers went into thousands, and which contained the surrender of external sovereignty, did not conform to the fiction of *terra nullius*. Most authors therefore tried as far as possible to debase the treaties. Thus there are references to 'pseudo protectorates' and 'fictitious protectorates'.⁷¹ One author actually spoke of 'sham treaties'.⁷² Instead of the allegedly quite impossible cession of rights of sovereignty, the permission given by the African leaders to occupy their territory was invoked by other authors.⁷³

All this amounted to a justification of treaty infringement, either by claiming there were no obligations, or by the Europeans themselves assuming the role of arbiters of their own conduct: 'L'État occupant est lié par les conventions passées entre lui et les Chefs indigènes; mais il est le seul juge de ses devoirs à cet égard.'⁷⁴ On account of their subordinate status, the Africans, on the other hand, could very well be prosecuted for disregarding their obligations. Should the municipal law of the colonial power change then, according to this interpretation, the treaty was also affected. Should the colonial power decide to take over the internal administration, for example, then the treaty of protectorate would thereby become obsolete.

Thus, in the eyes of the authors, the colonial protectorate offered only advantages to all participants. The colonial power refrained from exercising all rights of sovereignty at the very beginning. This meant less expense while leaving the Africans extensive autonomy.⁷⁵ But this was merely a period of preparation. The requirement of effectiveness in Article 35 of the Berlin Act was interpreted in such a way that the 'occupation à titre de protectorat' had to be fully implemented in the course of time. The colonial power had therefore not only the right but in fact the duty to do this. This meant that the treaty was merely a scrap of paper to which the colonial power had regard only so long as it was useful to do so: 'Des ces traités naissent sans doute des obligations pour la Puissance qui prend possession du pays en souscrivant des engagements, mais elle ne doit compte à aucun État des changements qu'elle croirait devoir introduire, même à l'encontre de ses promesses, dans son administration intérieure.'⁷⁶ Here, what was a question of power was embellished with law: the inability of the Europeans to secure genuine control over the continent with limited expenditure was presented as prudent moderation. The aspect of the limitation of expenditure was, however, repeatedly emphasized, for example by Gairal with particular clarity: the

⁷⁰ This expression is especially common among French authors. Sometimes it is in fact an essential part of their phraseology. Thus the study by F. Gairal, 'Le Protectorat international: Protection-sauvegarde, protectorat du droit des gens, protectorat colonial', Diss., Dijon 1896, contains the expression as a heading to the section pp. 270-94. Gairal in addition uses the otherwise uncommon phrase 'protectorat administratif' (pp. 666-7, pp. 294-300) for indirect rule under the general control of the colonial power: 'Le régime qui a pour effet de maintenir dans un territoire incorporé à un État, les institutions indigènes, en tant qu'elles sont conciliables avec l'autorité de la Puissance souveraine, au lieu d'y introduire le fonctionnement de l'administration coloniale ordinaire,' pp. 294-5.

⁷¹ Cf. Despagnet, *Protectorat*, pp. 212-13: 'Occupation déguisée en même temps que fictive . . . protectorats fictifs . . . pseudo-protectorats'. Such protectorates 'ne s'appliquent qu'à des territoires où ne se manifeste aucune organisation politique ayant le caractère d'un État'.

⁷² R. Adam, 'Völkerrechtliche Okkupation und deutsches Kolonialstaatsrecht', in *Archiv des öffentlichen Rechts*, 6 (1891), pp. 193-310: p. 259.

⁷³ Cf. e.g. C. Salomon, 'De l'occupation des territoires sans maître', Diss., Paris 1889, pp. 232-6.

⁷⁴ Gairal, 'Protectorat', p. 286.

⁷⁵ In particular pointed out by Gairal, 'Protectorat', pp. 271 f.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 296.

'acquisition de la souveraineté entière par occupation exigerait souvent, à raison de l'étendue des régions soumises et de la barbarie de leurs habitants, un tel déploiement de forces militaires, un tel accroissement du nombre des fonctionnaires et des dépenses publiques, que bien rarement les États colonisateurs, même les plus puissants, seraient en mesure d'y suffire'.⁷⁷ The attitude was, basically, the same as that adopted by the Spanish and Portuguese in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: one laid claim to the whole world, or in this case the whole of Africa, long before one acceded effectively to sovereign authority. One had always had that right.

Against theories like the above mentioned, it was enough merely to rely on the wording of the treaties. In these there was nothing about either occupation or subjection to municipal law. But, instead, the Africans had merely surrendered limited rights and retained their internal sovereignty without any reservations.⁷⁸ This simple fact, however, was for the most part suppressed in international legal theory. Many authors believed with almost touching naïvety in the justice of their cause. The unmistakable love of justice led to formulas which, though seriously intended, were frankly parodic in their effect as, for example, that the treaties with the African leaders rendered the occupation just: 'Les peuplades indigènes peuvent conclure des traités qui rendent l'occupation juste.'⁷⁹

This policy and the doctrine on which it was based were usually justified by way of civilization. The main duty of the colonial protectorate is the propagation of the 'bienfaits de la civilisation'; it is an 'admirable instrument de progrès'.⁸⁰ It is the 'mission de civilisation . . . qui constitue la seule justification plausible de la supériorité par lui [by the protector] prétendue'.⁸¹ The protector is required 'de se faire l'éducateur du protégé: éducateur matériel . . . et éducateur moral'.⁸² In this, optimism and cynicism could more or less unwillingly converge: 'Il ne faut pas perdre de vue que les avantages de la vie civilisée compensent largement les sacrifices que peut faire le protégé du côté de son indépendance . . . Ne peut-on pas dire, sans tomber dans un optimisme exagéré, que la cause de l'humanité a gagné quelque chose au développement de ce mode de protection?'⁸³ In the end, such optimism could turn into nationalism: 'N'est-il pas permis d'ajouter que la France, avec les qualités et les aptitudes naturelles de sa race, est particulièrement appelée à civiliser par le protectorat?'⁸⁴

Authors less obsessed with theorizing, however, fully recognized the difficulties and had no illusions about the fact that, in the end, the question of power was the crucial

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 268.

⁷⁸ Alexandrowicz also pointed out that the unilateral modification or abrogation of the agreement in the end was nothing better than a breach of treaty: 'The transformation of the classic protectorate into the colonial protectorate was in its essence not a legal but a political development. The texts of the treaties of protection show no trace of such development. Intention to annex the territory of the protected state could not have been stipulated by the contracting parties . . . The colonial protectorate has no place in international law as a juridically justifiable institution. It was at most a political expedient.' *Confrontation*, pp. 80-1, cf. *ibid.*, 70-1, 96 ff.

⁷⁹ Salomon, *Occupation*, p. 236. Cf. C.-O. Galtier, 'Des conditions de l'occupation des territoires dans le

droit international contemporain', Diss., Toulouse 1901, p. 83.

⁸⁰ M. Hachenburger, 'De la nature juridique du protectorat et de quelques-unes de ses conséquences en matière pénale', Diss., Paris 1896, pp. 136 f.

⁸¹ A. Pillet, 'Des droits de la puissance protectrice sur l'administration intérieure de l'état protégé', in *Revue générale de droit international public*, 2 (1889), pp. 583-608, p. 585.

⁸² A. Wilhelm, 'Des protectorats: Questions de principe se rattachant à leur fonctionnement', in *Annales de l'école libre de sciences politiques*, 4 (1889), pp. 694-707, p. 696.

⁸³ Gairal, 'Protectorat', pp. 302-3.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 304.

one. This can be illustrated from a book on South West Africa by Hermann Hesse. Hesse was a resolute advocate for Germany's assumption of direct rule. He could not avoid recognizing the treaties concluded with the chiefs. The tribes were 'political organizations, every one of which the German government had to take into consideration'. First of all, Germany had no 'full executive power' in the hinterland, only the 'power of protection'. The treaties 'had conceded the chiefs a fairly independent constitutional position'.⁸⁵ In Hesse's mind the goal is clear: 'From the outset, the Reich government had obviously to strive to secure quietly, imperceptibly, and without precipitation, but systematically, the unconditional subordination of the indigenous population to the authority of the Reich.' After the 1904-7 war the enemy lost its treaty rights. The opportunity to cancel all treaties altogether now had to be seized. Hesse was nevertheless aware that this could not be justified legally, that the colonial protectorate theory did not help. Therefore he argued from the standpoint of the national interest:

This would, however, from the formal standpoint, be harsh on the half-castes of Rehoboth who have constantly remained loyal to us; they have always striven to detach themselves from the other pure natives and cleave to the whites. From the material standpoint, however, they could be given assurances which would easily afford them consolation for this loss of their formal rights. In any event, one has no right to abide by the treaties with the half-castes in deference to sentiment and an exaggerated sense of justice if the harsh national interest requires that they be abrogated.⁸⁶

Hesse was harsh, but at least he was more honest than the theoreticians who still wanted to sanction the breaking of treaties with legal arguments.

Finally, an anonymous author writing in 1889 for the Colonial Institute in Brussels, was openly cynical but also remarkably honest in expressing his opinion:

Ce n'est pas ici le lieu de montrer quels services est susceptible de rendre le procédé du Protectorat; il soulève, on le sait, moins de résistances et se fait plus facilement accepter des populations indigènes que le procédé de l'annexion pure et simple. Il n'effraye pas, il laisse tout en place. En apparence, il ne transforme rien; ceux qui exerçaient précédemment le pouvoir le conservent; seulement ils s'aident de l'expérience et des conseils d'un Résident français qui, sous un aspect modeste, possède la réalité du pouvoir, ménage et facilite l'infiltration continue et progressive des idées et des marchandises françaises dans le pays protégé, et travaille sans relâche à y développer l'influence dictatrice de la France. Le mode du Protectorat permet donc à qui sait s'en servir de vaincre sans trop de difficultés les résistances nationales, et (on l'a dit parfaitement) de dissimuler sous un gant de velours la main de fer qu'il convient toujours d'avoir dans les rapports avec les indigènes africains.⁸⁷

This was perhaps the clearest judgement on the endeavours of theoreticians to reinterpret the power politics of their countries, the increasing subjection of Africa to European domination in the decades following the Conference of Berlin, as an unobjectionable mode of procedure in terms of international law where finally the higher right of civilizing a continent disregarded all vested treaty rights.

⁸⁵ Hesse, *Schutzverträge*, pp. 6, 12, 91.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 40, 159.

⁸⁷ *Le Régime des protectorats* (Bibliothèque coloniale

internationale, ed. Institut colonial international, Brussels, 4th series), 2 vols., Brussels 1899, vol. 2, p. 154.

6. THE ABOLITION OF TERRA NULLIUS BY THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE IN 1975

With the conclusion of the partitioning of Africa and Oceania at the turn of the century, the theory of those territories as *terrae nullius* lost its practical meaning. However, it was neither abandoned nor rejected. It still provided the historical justification for the European's taking possession of Africa. A radical change occurred only in the later stages of decolonization in 1975 in an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.⁸⁸

In 1974 Spain began proceedings aimed at granting independence to Western Sahara in the usual way. This would have meant an independent state within the colonial borders. However, Morocco and Mauritania laid claim to the territory. They argued that it had belonged to them earlier and had been snatched away from them by Spain only in the 1880s. Spain contested this interpretation. As a result of this, Mauritania and Morocco persuaded the United Nations to seek an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on, among other things, the following question: 'Was Western Sahara . . . at the time of colonization by Spain a territory belonging to no one (*terra nullius*)?'⁸⁹

The answer was unreservedly negative:

At the time of colonization Western Sahara was inhabited by peoples which, if nomadic, were socially and politically organized in tribes and under chiefs competent to represent them. Spain did not proceed on the basis that it was establishing its sovereignty over *terrae nullius* . . . Spain proclaimed that the king was taking the Río de Oro under his protection on the basis of agreements which had been entered into with the chiefs of the local tribes.⁹⁰

This interpretation was valid not only for the extremely thinly populated Western Sahara but also, *a fortiori*, for all of Africa. This was explicitly stated. The continent had never been at any time a *terra nullius*

Whatever differences of opinion there may have been among jurists, the State practice of the relevant period indicates that territories inhabited by tribes or peoples having a social and political organization were not regarded as *terrae nullius*. It shows that in the case of such territories the acquisition of sovereignty was not generally considered as effected unilaterally through 'occupation' of *terra nullius* by original title but through agreements concluded with local rulers. On occasion, it is true, the word 'occupation' was used in a non-technical sense denoting simply acquisition of sovereignty; but that did not signify that the acquisition of sovereignty through such agreements with authorities of the country was regarded as an 'occupation' of a '*terra nullius*' in the proper sense of these terms. On the contrary, such agreements with local rulers, whether or not considered as an actual 'cession' of the territory, were regarded as derivative roots of title, and not original titles obtained by occupation of *terrae nullius*.⁹¹

If this were true then the provisions of Chapter 6 of the Berlin Act, in so far as they did not refer to protectorates, had merely been fictions and lacked any practical significance.

⁸⁸ 16 Oct. 1975 printed in *International Court of Justice*, 12-69. For details of literature cf. Fisch, *Europäische Expansion*, p. 461.

⁸⁹ *International Court of Justice*, 37.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 39, paragraph 81.

Generally speaking this correctly described what was, in fact, actually happening. The judges merely overlooked the fact that from time to time occupations had been taking place, though overall these had been of little significance. On the other hand, this exclusive reference to practice ignored the real purpose of the Berlin provisions on occupation, whose most important function was justification of Europe's hold on Africa. This function is not mentioned in the advisory opinion and the theory is not rejected but simply ignored. In this, the Court of Justice certainly did not do justice to the Conference and it is also unclear whether it understood the aims underlying Chapter 6 at all. This was, however, of little significance as far as the advisory opinion was concerned. Once it was accepted that in practice the concept of *terra nullius* had been meaningless, then the theory likewise had to be regarded as untenable. From a historical point of view this also meant that the countless treaties signed with African leaders again assumed an unambiguous character in international law and that their non-observance by the colonial powers had been no mere administrative matter but, on the contrary, a breach of treaty. But the historian must not forget that the Europeans, at the time of the partitioning of Africa, were influenced by theory and frequently genuinely regarded Africa as *terra nullius*. As a rule, however, they were unable or found it too expensive to convert this way of seeing things into practice since Africa offered resistance to being treated as an ownerless territory. With regard to practice however, the advisory opinion represented a decisive step towards the decolonization of international law.

7. THE DEVELOPMENT OF NON-COLONIAL INTERNATIONAL LAW

The Berlin Conference formed a link in the chain of European congresses and conferences in the nineteenth century, from the Congress of Vienna to the peace conferences at The Hague, at which general international law was constantly being expanded and becoming increasingly more codified. As a result, more and more international bodies and organizations were created. The delegates saw their function within this framework. They were quick to talk of progress in international law.⁹²

The real purpose and motivation for the Conference, however, stemmed from the problems in the relations between the European powers resulting from the initial partitioning of Africa. Consequently, one has to distinguish between colonial and non-colonial matters in the proceedings of the Conference. Non-colonial matters concerned arrangements between the participating states. This—less successful—side of the Conference will now be briefly examined, not so much from the point of view of practical political arrangements, as from that of the development of international law.

7.1 *The Universal Postal Union*

Article 7 of the Berlin Act incorporated the Congo Basin into the Universal Postal Union. This measure was uncontested in principle. Only the modus and the tempo of

⁹¹ Ibid., 39, par. 80.

⁹² Thus Courcel considered the regulations for effectiveness of occupation as 'progrès dans le droit des gens': Martens *Nouveau Recueil*, 2nd series, vol. 10,

p. 346, cf. p. 344, and Launay used the same phrase in connection with Article 11 (neutrality). The commission described freedom of navigation as 'une des plus belles conquêtes du droit moderne' (ibid., 292).

the procedure were further discussed.⁹³ This exemplified a recurrent tendency to treat Africa in the same way as Europe. Not, however, as a European partner, but as an integral part—actually or potentially—of the old continent. It belonged to Europe since it was partitioned by the European states. There was no question of Africa having a special status.

7.2. *Navigation on the Congo and Niger*

Freedom of navigation on the Congo and on the Niger was, together with free trade in the Congo Basin, the main subject of the Conference. The delegates emphasized continuity and the development and adaptation of existing European and American rules. Thus there was an explicit reference to tradition in connection with this subject only: in the preamble, the provisions of the General Act of Vienna of 1815 are designated as a basis for the Congo and Niger rivers. In the case of the Congo, the application and development of those principles in Europe and America, in particular in regard to the Danube, are invoked. In the case of the latter, the pertinent treaties of Paris (1856), Berlin (1878), and London (1881 and 1883) are explicitly referred to. The same awareness of tradition was to be heard in the debates. Again and again reference was made to European and American precedents. Apart from the Danube, the following rivers were mentioned: the Scheldt, the Meuse, the Rhine, and the Elbe in Europe, as well as the Paraná and Uruguay in America.⁹⁴ Finally, in the Act itself, it was also stressed that the provisions should become part of international law: 'These provisions are recognized by the Signatory Powers as becoming henceforth a part of international law' (Articles 13 and 26).

Here the effort to integrate Africa, in terms of international law, wholly and entirely into the European-American domain becomes clearer. The details of the provisions differed, of course, from those for European rivers. The principles however were the same. More than likely this tendency to standardize largely contributed to the navigation provisions in respect of both rivers having no very great effect. It was a dogmatic attitude which denied Africa any special status even within the framework of European control.

This attitude became even clearer in two further points.

7.3. *Neutrality*

The Congo and the Niger, together with their onshore routes, were to be declared neutral in time of war so that navigation could proceed without interruption (Articles 25 and 33). This was not contested at the Conference; only some details of its implementation were discussed. Here European-American precedents could be referred to such as the 1853 treaty on the navigation of the Uruguay.⁹⁵ The international status of the Congo Basin itself was not affected.

Again it was Kasson who introduced a more far-reaching proposal and, as a result, created considerable difficulties. He wanted the Congo Basin, that is, the territory with

⁹³ 5th session of 18 Dec. 1884.

⁹⁴ Martens, *Nouveau Recueil*, 2nd series, vol. 10, p. 262 (Kapnist in the 5th session of 18 Dec. 1884); *ibid.*, 273 f., Commission report.

⁹⁵ Treaty between Argentina and France of 10 July 1853, Art. 6, printed in Conference minutes. *Ibid.*, p. 294. Argentina concluded identical treaties with Great Britain and the United States.

which the Conference was immediately occupied, to be declared neutral in its entirety. Even if all colonial powers in Europe were to wage war with one another, it would not be affected by this.⁹⁶ Various delegations, in particular the British, the German, and the Italian, cautiously agreed.⁹⁷ Portugal and France, on the other hand, resisted this uncompromisingly. This might in fact have created difficulties for both countries since they had possessions which were only partly situated in the Congo Basin. In a situation of war, territory within the basin would have been declared neutral, the remaining territory not, or at least its neutrality would not have been equally guaranteed in international terms.⁹⁸

However important this objection was, a more fundamental question seemed of even greater importance, especially to Courcel. Neutrality would have meant renouncing fundamental rights of sovereignty. This again would have meant a divergent status for Europe and Africa (namely the Congo Basin) in international law. Africa would have had an independent status in international law, at least in one area. This would not have endangered European rule in the least. However an important differentiation would have been made between the two continents, a differentiation based, in the end, on enormous factual differences. This was actually both the basis and the avowed aim of Kasson's proposal. He recalled American history. Constant entanglement in European wars during colonial times had seriously damaged the continent. In particular, the deployment of the Indians on both sides as auxiliaries had had a brutalizing effect.⁹⁹ Here the reasoning contained a probably intentional ambiguity. On the one hand, the well-being of the natives was argued; on the other, Kasson pointed to the danger these people represented for the Europeans: 'Notre commerce et nos colonies ne peuvent être prospères et la vie de nos nationaux ne sera pas en sûreté si nous laissons transporter les pavillons de guerre étrangers dans un pays plein de barbares avides du pillage des biens des blancs.'¹⁰⁰ He wanted international law to take into consideration a specifically colonial situation which did not exist in Europe.

Kasson was unsuccessful, particularly also since he was only half-heartedly supported by the powers who in principle were in favour of this point.¹⁰¹ The finally accepted provision (Chapter 3) remained completely non-binding and did not restrict the sovereignty of the colonial powers. Article 10 merely laid down that a state could declare the neutrality of its territory in the Congo Basin and that this neutrality had to be respected by the other powers. In this, provision was being made for the Congo Free State and Belgian neutrality. Article 11 was just another half-hearted response to Kasson's proposal. If one or several powers were embroiled in a war, then they could declare the neutrality of their territories in the Congo Basin, but only if all belligerents agreed to this.

7.4. *The ban on alcohol*

At the second session Launay, the Italian delegate, cautiously pointed out that the question of trade in alcoholic drinks might also be discussed.¹⁰² In the following session

⁹⁶ 5th session of 18 Dec. 1884. *Ibid.*, pp. 286, 288, 309-11.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 286 f., 324-6.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 286-8, 326 f.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 286, 288, 309 f.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 310.

¹⁰¹ Further discussions: 6th session of 22 Dec. 1884 (*ibid.*, pp. 324-8); 9th session of 23 Feb. 1885 (*ibid.*, pp. 357-61), with Commission report *ibid.*, pp. 398-401.

¹⁰² 19 Nov. 1884, *ibid.*, p. 212.

Serpa, the Portuguese delegate, interpreted the suggestion as a call for prohibition and agreed to this. The misunderstanding was immediately cleared up, however, and the matter was left as non-binding.¹⁰³ Later the British delegation moved in energetically. Referring to the particular damage alcohol could cause in Islamic territories, it suggested in the commission that in the territory of the Lower Niger there should be a ban on alcoholic drinks in transit. Apparently there were protests. The proposal was therefore made non-binding; the local representatives of the powers could take such measures with regard to the alcohol trade as seemed to them to be in the interests of the 'populations indigènes'. The commission merely suggested to the Conference, 'd'émettre le vœu qu'une entente s'établisse entre les Gouvernements pour régler la question dont il s'agit d'une manière qui concilie les droits de l'humanité avec les intérêts du commerce, en ce que ces derniers peuvent avoir de légitime'.¹⁰⁴ This pious wish was accepted by the plenary whereas any more radical commitment was rejected by several delegates.¹⁰⁵ Busch, the German delegate, in fact hastened to confirm that the wish should not be understood as a restriction on free trade.¹⁰⁶ It was only included in the minutes and not in the General Act. Here at best in the commitment 'to watch over the preservation of the native tribes, and to care for the improvement of the conditions of their moral and material well-being' (Article 6) might one also be able to think of the alcohol trade.

The main reason for the omission was clear: the 'intérêts du commerce'. Here once again was the tendency to prevent any legal distinction between Europe and Africa, that is, between European and African territories. Slavery and the slave trade were abolished despite considerable opposing material interests. This merely resulted in an alignment on European standards. The banning of the trade in alcohol, on the other hand, would have established an actual difference between Europe and Africa.

7.5. *Free trade*

The principle of the greatest possible assimilation, in terms of international law, of African and European territory did not, however, apply to the main subject of the Conference, free trade in the Congo Basin. Here a system of administration was introduced that differed fundamentally from the situation in Europe. The principle was that no country should be able to derive economic advantage from control of its territory. This cannot, however, be seen as a counter tendency or as a legal differentiation between Europe and Africa. The special status of the Congo Basin resulted not from account being taken of African characteristics, but from competition between the colonial powers. Free trade as such was nothing new in international law and its particular application to the Congo Basin in the end was more in the nature of a political compromise than a development of international law. It soon became obvious that account had not been taken of African characteristics in that provisions on free trade were also for the most part disregarded.

If one looks at the non-colonial, international legal aspects of the Berlin Conference, one can see a clear attempt being made to treat Africa as far as possible as European

¹⁰³ 27 Nov. 1884, *ibid.*, p. 226.

¹⁰⁴ Commission report 5th session, *ibid.*, p. 291.

¹⁰⁵ 5th session of 18 Dec. 1884, *ibid.*, pp. 268-70. The

subject was referred back to the commission; this did not result in any new proposal however.

¹⁰⁶ 6th session of 22 Dec. 1884, *ibid.*, p. 318.

territory. This once again reflects the colonial tendencies of the Conference. In the first place, as far as the Conference was concerned, Africa and Europe radically differed from each other: Africa as *terra nullius* was simply the object of occupation by the Europeans. Once it had been subjugated, however, from a legal point of view all essential differences were eliminated. African territories could and had to be treated in a similar way to the European territories of the colonial powers. This, of course, was to disregard the factual differences. The attitude was once again simply a reflection of the colonial attitude. Lack of consideration for Africa's originality was also probably a reason which explained the extensive ineffectiveness of those provisions of the Berlin Act relating to the development of non-colonial international law.

The Conference of Berlin integrated Africa into European (or European-American) international law but on purely European conditions; colonial considerations dominated in every respect. These conditions were only finally eliminated by the independence movement which transformed Africa from an object into a subject of international law.

The Berlin Conference in the German, French, and British Press*

ELFI BENDIKAT

It is no coincidence that historians dealing with the Berlin-Conference have so far mainly concentrated on the diplomatic activities of the participating governments. After all, the Conference was an important event of government-inspired diplomacy.¹ But the classical view of diplomatic history, in which foreign policy appears detached from party infighting at home, neglects both domestic commitments and ties, in particular those of governments answerable to Parliament, and the exploitation of diplomatic events, conflicts, or achievements for domestic purposes. An extension of the traditional approach in this sense involves investigating party attitudes to the Berlin Conference in the three most important great powers. This will also highlight the interdependence of domestic and foreign policy.

Contemporary press coverage affords an opportunity to analyse party attitudes. This approach is all the more justifiable since newspapers often openly sided with particular parties. Moreover, the influence of the press on political opinion grew with the evolution of the political mass market and the liberalization of press legislation—at least in France and Germany—during the 1870s and the early 1880s. The tendency for politicians to be influenced by public opinion in certain aspects of foreign policy, though sporadic at first, was none the less marked, and was particularly evident in Franco-German relations as early as the 1870s. Given the existence of universal male suffrage, governments could not simply ignore the political campaigns and pressure exerted by economic, Church, and humanitarian interest groups. On the other hand, the influence that could be applied to foreign policy was restricted by the ideologization of power politics in Germany and by the élitist concept of politics in Britain. As in the case of the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine in 1871, governments appealed to public opinion mostly to legitimize their policies. Disraeli's statement to the House of Lords in August 1880, in which he referred to the press as an adviser, immediately adding, however, it lacked expertise and was too emotional, expresses the extremes of flattery and indifference characterizing this relationship.²

With the evolution of a political mass market the press gained an important dual function. On the one hand, it influenced its readership and served politicians as a source of information. On the other hand, the press became the politicians' most

* Translated by Eamon Helly and Angela Davies.

¹ G. de Courcel, *L'Influence de la conférence de Berlin de 1885 sur le droit colonial international*, Paris 1935; S. Crowe, *The Berlin West African Conference 1884-1885*, London 1942; G. Königk, *Die Berliner Kongo-Konferenz, 1884-1885: Ein Beitrag zur Kolonialpolitik Bismarcks*, Essen 1938;

H. Yarnall, 'The Great Powers and the Congo Conference in the Years 1884 and 1885', Ph.D. Diss. Göttingen 1934.

² G. A. Craig, A. L. George, *Force and Statecraft: Diplomatic Problems of our Times*, Oxford 1983, pp. 60-1.

important means of influencing mass opinion. Successful manipulation, however, presupposes the receptivity of its target audience. Newspaper reports therefore also reflected the mentality of their readers, in that editors adapted their newspapers, style, language, and opinions to those of their readers. In this article the press coverage of the Berlin Conference will therefore also be analysed in the light of political trends within the three great European powers. This will afford a means of comparing the various party camps.³

The different names given to the Berlin Conference, especially in the German press, is one indication of the variety of expectations and ideas connected with it. The term 'Conférence de Berlin', taken from the official minutes, was used almost without exception by the French press. This was natural enough because French was the language of international conferences. In Germany the terms 'Kongo-Konferenz' and 'Westafrika-Konferenz' were more popular, as the official title gave no information about the subject of the Conference. English used both terms, and official sources referred to the 'Berlin West African Conference'. The official title, taken from the language of the Conference, is the most imprecise of all the designations. It does justice to the topic as defined, very broadly, by Bismarck, and also underlines the importance of Berlin as the capital and an international conference venue. The British title, by contrast, refers to trade and colonial problems in a geographically restricted area.

Especially during the preliminary discussions prior to the Conference, when, expectations were highest, terms such as 'europäischer Kongress' (*Neue Preussische Zeitung*, 23 August 1884, page 1) and 'Berliner Congress' (*Kölnische Zeitung*, 11 October 1884, morning edition, page 1) were popular in the German press. The term 'Berliner Kongress' in particular implied parallels with 1878, when leading statesmen and diplomats from Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy, Austria-Hungary, Russia, and Turkey gathered in Berlin to decide on the territorial reorganization of the Balkans. However, even the National Liberal Press had to admit that the West Africa Conference was not as important as the 1878 Congress, although both conferences were based on the tradition of arbitrating between the great powers (*Rheinisch-Westfälische Zeitung*, 18 November 1884, morning edition, p. 1). The nations taking part in the 1884-9 Conference were represented solely by ambassadors or envoys accredited at the German Court, which suggests that this Conference was much less important than the 1878 Congress.

In 1884-9 representatives of the European powers and the USA assembled in order to settle current disputes and to prevent future conflicts in the 'general interests of Europe' and 'in the interests of African development'. This prompted the Pro-Gladstone *Manchester Guardian* aptly to describe the Conference as a 'colonial concert' (*Neue Preussische Zeitung*, 16 December 1884, p. 1; *Manchester Guardian*, 13 January 1884, p. 5). Newspapers that supported the National Liberal Centre Party, the Free Conservative party and the German Conservative Party in particular saw Germany as the guarantor of a 'continental agreement' (*National-Zeitung*, 10 October 1884, evening

³ A similar approach is made by R. Louis who examines British and French press agitation on the Congo and Niger questions: W. R. Louis, 'The Berlin Congo Conference', in P. Gifford and R. Louis (eds.), *France and Britain in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule*, New Haven 1971, pp. 167-200. Grube also deals

with the Conference in connection with the reaction of the French press to Bismarck's foreign and colonial policies: J. Grube, *Bismarcks Politik in Europa und Übersee: Seine 'Annäherung' an Frankreich im Urteil der Pariser Presse, 1883-1885*, Bern, Frankfurt on Main 1975, pp. 97-102.

edition, p. 1) that was interpreted as proof of the European powers' confidence and of Germany's 'status as a world power' (*National-Zeitung*, 15 October 1884, morning edition, p. 1).

The German press therefore, was understandably most interested in the Conference, while the foreign press treated the actual proceedings, which were dominated by diplomatic routine and technical matters, with indifference. Besides, the oft-repeated exotic details and the experts' geographical fantasies can have been of little interest to ordinary readers. The Whig *Economist* reported ironically: 'The majority of electors do not clearly know where the Congo is, have the most indefinite ideas of West Africa, and are not accustomed to consider the trade of that region seriously important' (*Economist*, 15 November 1884, p. 1383). Even the delegates had no knowledge of Africa. They were dependent on experts' advice, and their horizons were limited to Europe.

The Economist cited the insignificance of British trade with West Africa as a reason for the lack of public interest in the Conference (*ibid.*). This trade, the main products of which were palm oil, peanuts, and india rubber, was based on the principle of unequal barter. Great Britain's chief export products were cotton goods, textiles, hardware, pig-iron, commodities made from wood, and a small amount of weapons and gunpowder.⁴ Liverpool was the main port for the export of cotton and textiles.⁵ None the less, there was opposition in Britain to the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty of 26 February 1884, which recognized Portugal's claims to sovereignty in the Congo estuary in exchange for trade benefits for Britain.⁶ This opposition movement significantly contributed to the non-ratification of the treaty. Since this separate agreement between Britain and Portugal virtually established a condominium exclusively favouring British trade interests, it also aroused international protest and consequently became a decisive factor in Bismarck's decision to hold a conference in autumn 1884.

Since as early as 1882 the opposition movement in Britain had been led by lobbies from the centres of trade and industry traditionally involved in export (Liverpool, Birmingham, Manchester, and Glasgow). A year later it was joined by shipping companies, the Chambers of Commerce in Bristol, Leeds, and Bradford, and the City of London.⁷ Together with missionary societies, philanthropists, and the Anti-Slavery movement, the opposition movement rejected any co-operation with Portuguese *Raubkolonialismus*, objecting to the mismanagement, corruption, and tyranny which were damaging trade.⁸ The trade and industry lobby was able to build on an internationally widespread stereotype of Portugal as the 'most backward nation in Europe',⁹ an unreliable treaty partner.¹⁰ As the 'Turkey in the West',¹¹ Portugal did not deserve the status of a colonial power: 'Her colonies are a crushing burden to the mother country, and her functionaries, with salaries hopelessly in arrear, are frequently

⁴ Cf. statistics in: Public Record Office (PRO), FO 403/47, no. 17, Inclosure no. 3, p. 41. Cf. also the article in this volume by Colin Newbury.

⁵ PRO, FO 403/47, no. 17, Inclosure no. 8, p. 44.

⁶ Cf. Articles 1, 9, and 10 of the treaty in: F. Latour da Veiga Pinto, *Le Portugal et le Congo au XIX^e siècle: Étude d'histoire des relations internationales*, Bordeaux 1972, appendix 1, pp. 319-27; also A. Pfungst, *Die politische Theilung Afrikas nach den neuesten Vereinbarungen*, Berlin

1890, pp. 102-10.

⁷ Details on this in R. Anstey, *Britain and the Congo in the 19th Century*, Oxford 1962, pp. 118-21.

⁸ *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, 4-7 (1884-7), vol. 4, May 1884, p. 99 f.

⁹ Stanley, in: *Scotsman*, 5 Dec. 1884, p. 4.

¹⁰ W. E. Forster, in *Hansard*, 3 Apr. 1883, col. 1331.

¹¹ Jacob Bright, in *Hansard*, 3 Apr. 1883, col. 1294.

driven to blackmail foreign traders, in order to live at their posts' (*Standard*, 4 February 1885, p. 5).

The National Liberal *Kölnische Zeitung*, similarly drew a less than inspiring picture of the Portuguese colonies as impoverished, neglected, and at the mercy of civil servants (*Kölnische Zeitung*, 2 November 1884, morning edition, p. 1). the economic lobby's argument that a treaty with Portugal would lead to a general stagnation of trade in this region was endorsed by the free trade groups of both party camps in Great Britain. Whereas the Whig *Economist* rejected all co-operation with Portugal because of its 'ultra-protectionist fiscal policy', the conservative *Standard* pointed out the danger of creating a 'Portuguese India' in the lower Congo that would become impoverished like Angola and Mozambique (*Economist*, 7 April 1883, p. 398; *Standard*, 4 February 1885, p. 5). The criticisms expressed by Portuguese merchants, for whom the Ambriz and Mozambique tariffs were too liberal, show to what extent this accusation was justified.¹²

Criticism was also directed at slavery and the slave trade. In order to circumvent the Congress of Vienna Act, which prohibited the slave trade with effect from February 1815, the Portuguese had developed a system of contractual work as a cover for slave trading, particularly in Angola.¹³ According to the *Observer's* Anti-Slavery Reporter, this 'semi-barbaric rule' (*Observer*, 16 November 1884, p. 5). was possible because, among other things, most of the Portuguese settlers and administrative officials were former criminals.¹⁴ This generalization was, however, unjustified.

Criticism was expressed especially by France, though other powers that were not directly involved but were nevertheless affected by the economic clauses—Germany, the USA, the Low Countries, and Spain—were also critical. Britain had adopted a defensive strategy towards France in West Africa since 1882, even though this region had not yet been recognized in government circles as an important area of expansion for Britain. The French therefore believed that Great Britain had yielded to Portuguese claims to sovereignty in order to obstruct French colonial expansion in West Africa.¹⁵ France's main export to West Africa was alcohol, followed by cotton goods, weapons, munitions, and grain.¹⁶ Apart from the economic lobby, the most important interest group were the armed forces, in particular the navy. They used colonial expansion to justify rearming the French fleet, and consequently to accelerate the Franco-British arms race. French protectionism, however, was the decisive factor in the creation of economic and political rivalry in West Africa. In Gabon (20 per cent duty), Senegal, and Guinea protective duties were levied on non-French goods.¹⁷ In a period of international economic crisis, the idea of a colonial customs union became popular in France, as the Paris Chamber of Commerce's report of May 1885 shows.¹⁸

¹² Latour da Veiga Pinto, *Portugal*, p. 191.

¹³ Regarding this cf. the *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, 4 (Apr. 1884), p. 84; May 1884, p. 94, 99; July 1884, p. 156; Stanley, Nov. 1884, p. 207; *Scotsman*, 5 Dec. 1884, p. 4.

¹⁴ *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, 4 (May 1884), p. 99 f.

¹⁵ For the British position on West Africa: R. Robinson, J. Gallagher with A. Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism*, 2nd edn., London 1981, p. 14; Waddington to Ferry, London 4 Mar. 1884, in Ministère des Affaires étrangères Français (MAEF), Correspondence politique, Angleterre, vol. 803, no. 15; Annexe to the dispatch of 14 Mar. 1884,

Paris, Note dated 13 Mar. 1884, in *Affaires du Congo et de l'Afrique occidentale* (1882-4), pp. 27-9.

¹⁶ Cf. details in: PRO, FO 403/47, no. 17, Inclosure no. 6, p. 43.

¹⁷ PRO, FO 403/47, no. 17, Inclosure no. 6, p. 45; cf. also J. A. Crowe to Lord Lyons, 20 June 1884, in C. W. Newbury (ed.), *British Policy towards West Africa*, Oxford 1971, p. 434.

¹⁸ Cf. Archives nationales (AN), F 126427, summary extract of the Proceedings of the Chamber of Commerce, Paris, 13 and 27 May 1885.

After Great Britain had 'kicked France out of West Africa'—this opinion was shared by the German Conservative *Neue Preussische Zeitung*—Bismarck intervened in order to prevent a partition of the Congo Basin between France, Portugal, and the *Association International Africaine* (AIA) (*Neue Preussische Zeitung*, 23 April 1884, p. 1). The opponents of the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty finally succeeded in blocking the treaty as a result of Franco-German co-operation inspired by their common defensive interests. Although in comparison with France and Great Britain Germany had only small territorial interests in West Africa, it was one of the leading trading nations in the region.

Bismarck's attention was drawn to the Congo as a result of petitions made to the Foreign Office by the Chambers of Commerce between March and May 1884. Although these petitions do not fully represent the attitudes of the various entrepreneurs and branches of industry involved, they do provide a picture of the attitudes of individual branches of industry and individual regions to colonial expansion. The majority of signatories came from the Rhineland, followed by Westphalia, the Rhine-Main region, and southern and central German provinces.¹⁹ The main industries involved were the export-orientated iron and metal manufacturing industry, the mining industry, the coal, iron, and steel industries, and the textile industry. Cities in the north of Germany specialized in exporting spirits of inferior quality (schnapps made from potatoes, grain spirit, and rum). About 40 per cent of all exports to Africa were handled by the Hamburg retail trade. In 1882–3 about 60 per cent of its exports to Africa consisted of alcohol; it also exported salt, rice, gunpowder, and building material.²⁰ The petitions by the German Chambers of Commerce and the liberal press used the same arguments as the British Chambers of Commerce in their criticism of the economic consequences of the treaty.²¹ They also put forward the melodramatic alternative of prosperity or economic decline. Unlike their rivals, however, the German Chambers of Commerce could use the arguments of the British Chambers of Commerce to legitimize and strengthen their own position.

Common to criticisms of the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty were high expectations of trade in the Congo. From a European perspective, the Congo seemed to be a Utopia. In the Middle Ages India had been regarded as the mythical kingdom of Prester John and hence Utopia; in the fourteenth century Utopia was located in Abyssinia. With the Portuguese discovery in 1485 of the river Congo, which was identified as Pison, the river of Paradise, the Congo region gained the reputation of a Utopia where an earthly paradise was believed to exist.²² Explorers, well versed in presenting themselves as experts, were important in disseminating and popularizing these ideas of Utopia.²³

The British explorer, Henry M. Stanley, appeared on the scene as an expert *par excellence*. On contract to the Comité d'Études du Haut Congo, the brainchild of King Leopold II, Stanley led an expedition from 1879 to 1883 to investigate commercial opportunities. During the *Berlin Conference* he was technical adviser to the American

¹⁹ Cf. petitions in Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (PA), *Aktenstücke betreffend die Kongo-Frage April 1885*, Dt 177, vol. 1, nos. 4–8.

²⁰ Figures in PRO, FO 403/47, no. 17, Inclosure no. 5, p. 43. Also FO 403/46, Consul General Annesley to Granville, Hamburg 19 Oct. 1884, no. 91, p. 62; *Aktenstücke*, p. 9, appendix to no. 4; Trade in West Africa in supplement to no. 32 of *Neue Preussische Zeitung*, 7 Feb. 1885; *Vossische Zeitung*, 3 Dec. 1884, morning edn., p. 1.

²¹ Regarding this cf. also the *National Zeitung*, 22 Nov. 1884, morning edn., p. 1; *Vossische Zeitung*, 22 Nov. 1884, morning edn., p. 1; *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 25 May 1884, morning edn., p. 1.

²² E. Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, 2 vols., Frankfurt 1977, vol. 2, p. 903.

²³ On the reliability of experts see *Neue Preussische Zeitung*, 21 Nov. 1884, p. 1.

delegation. He acted as Leopold's propagandist in Europe and effectively bestowed a philanthropic and scientific veneer on the commercial interests of the AIA. The intensified competition resulting from Brazza's expedition, however, meant that Stanley increasingly had to present the AIA as a commercial enterprise. In a publicity campaign he ran in Germany and Great Britain between September 1884 and January 1885, Stanley succeeded in producing a synthesis between an economic plan that appeared to be altruistic and a civilizing mission. His picture of future prospects was received enthusiastically by his audiences—not least thanks to his fascinating style of lecturing. His views were mostly received uncritically by the German press. This can be explained by Germany's lack of experience in colonial policy and by Bismarck's exploitation of colonial expansion in the 1884 general election.

The opening up of the African interior raised enormous expectations in connection with the river Congo. Due to its length and width, it radiated a fascination that found expression in comparisons with an artery or with the Amazon.²⁴ This reaction is understandable in so far as in underdeveloped regions that are difficult to traverse rivers are important trade and transport routes. In order to convey a vivid impression of the enormous size of the territory through which the Congo flowed, the region was compared with parts of India and China.²⁵ Trade expectations attached to this region were of a somewhat illusory nature, which may be explained in terms of the middle-class penchant for exotic escapism and irrationalism in an age of industrial capitalism. Since exports from West and South West Africa consisted mainly of indiarubber, palm oil and palm kernels, ivory, peanuts, and precious woods, these exotic products inspired hopes of even more natural wealth.²⁶ Stanley, in particular, drew comparisons with the beauty of Southern France and conjured up a new gold rush when he spoke of 'rich gold, silver, iron, copper, and lead mines'.²⁷ People who suggested that the idea of great wealth simply waiting to be removed was an illusion—Pechuel-Loesche, for example—were ignored or dismissed as grumblers.²⁸

The expectation of an unlimited market for industrial products was also based on an illusion—that of a population capable of consuming on a European scale. Following the Chinese model, it was estimated at about 40 to 50 million people.²⁹ Moreover the *Quarterly Review* prophesied a population explosion on a scale similar to that of India or China.³⁰ Adolf Woermann, a West Africa trader from Hamburg and a National Liberal Member of Parliament, tried to refute critics who reacted with scepticism to the idea of a large domestic market in Africa by suggesting that the Africans' 'imitative instinct' would produce a market for European industrial products within a short time.³¹

Stanley tried to recruit settlers with the argument that 'Central Europeans could live and work just as well in the Congo as in London' (*National Zeitung*, 10 August 1884,

²⁴ Stanley at the London Chamber of Commerce in: *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung*, 1 (1884) on 18 July 1884, p. 449; G. Moynier, *La Question du Congo devant l'Institut du Droit Internationale*, Geneva 1883, pp. 5, 7.

²⁵ *Quarterly Review*, 159 (1885), p. 181.

²⁶ *Rheinisch-Westfälische Zeitung*, 21 Aug. 1884, morning edn., p. 1.

²⁷ Stanley at the German Colonial Society in Berlin, in *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 20 Nov. 1884, morning edn., p. 1.

²⁸ Pechuel-Loesche's criticism in *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung*, 1 (1884), p. 161.

²⁹ *Vossische Zeitung*, 15 Nov. 1884, morning edn., p. 1; *Quarterly Review*, 159 (1885), p. 181; *National Zeitung*, 6 Dec. 1884, morning edn., p. 1; Stanley in *Kölnische Zeitung*, 8 Jan. 1885, morning edn., p. 1.

³⁰ *Quarterly Review*, 159 (1885), p. 182.

³¹ Woermann, in: *Stenographische Berichte über die Verhandlungen des Reichstages*, 6th parliamentary term, 1st Session, vol. 80, 10 Jan. 1885, p. 529.

morning edition, p. 1). The *Germania*, the Catholic Centre Party newspaper, also believed that in the Congo there were 'truly paradisiacal tracts of country', where it was not too difficult for Germans to become acclimatized (*Germania*, 30 May 1884, evening edition, p. 1). Referring to the large number of elephants, lions, antelopes, and so on, Stanley also pointed out the high leisure value of the Congo basin for keen hunters.³² Whereas the National Liberal *National Zeitung* rather faint-heartedly asserted that there were no fields in London to cultivate, a gibe which was directed at Stanley's above mentioned comparison, the Social Democratic *Berliner Volksblatt* rejected all attempts to clothe in fine words the 'raw reality' of colonial life (*National Zeitung*, 10 August 1884, morning edition, p. 1; *Berliner Volksblatt*, 22 November 1884, supplement).

In contrast to the German reaction, Stanley's vision of a trading paradise met with ironical scepticism in the liberal and conservative press in Great Britain. The 'millions of people gathered in large towns and villages, and eager for trade' (*Scotsman*, 4 December 1884, p. 4) of whom the majority, even if there were a few cannibals among them, were intent on trade 'abounding in ivory, canewood, india rubber, and other wild products of the tropics', were not considered a guarantee by the conservative *Standard* 'to which the investor would care to entrust his capital' (*Standard*, 19 September 1884, p. 5).

Criticism was expressed in Germany too, but it was much more restrained and limited to a few experts, mainly liberal publicists. Apart from Pechuel-Loesche, A. von Danckelmann had suggested that the lack of infrastructure and the undeveloped consumer habits of the native population made many expectations excessive. He also pointed to the initially high investment costs.³³ Similarly, after the election, the National Liberal *Kölnische Zeitung* warned against illusions, as the population had first to be accustomed to 'organized work and the civilizing effects of education' (7 January 1885, morning edition, p. 1). The Whig *Spectator* in Britain also warned that African civilization was on the same level as that of the Maoris in New Zealand, 'while their moral nature has not risen to the Maori-level' (6 December 1884, p. 1607). In particular, the Left Liberal *Bremer Weser Zeitung* and the *Vossische Zeitung* treated Stanley's claims with scepticism and warned against any 'frenzy' (17 October 1884, midday edition, p. 1; *Vossische Zeitung*, 14 October 1884, morning edition, p. 1).

Even the generally pro-colonial, conservative republican *Journal des débats* tersely described Stanley's claims as fantastical (19 August 1884, p. 1). This dismissive attitude can, however, be traced back to the conflict of interests between Stanley and the French explorer, Savorgnan de Brazza. Between 1880 and 1882 Brazza had led an expedition to the Congo with the aim of pursuing scientific and economic exploration, as well as claiming sovereignty in the region. In December 1880 in Franceville Brazza had met Stanley's expedition, whose purpose was similarly to secure monopoly rights by so-called treaties of protection.

In view of hopes of 'exploiting the African continent', which could be realized only with the help of private capital, *The Times* aptly described the situation as follows: 'African trade is bringing the nations of Europe into new and close juxtaposition, while their rights are frequently so vague and the limits of their jurisdiction so obscure as to

³² Stanley, in *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, 5 (Mar. 1885), p. 321.

³³ A. v. Danckelmann, 'Das Congo-Gebiet', in F. Fabri, *Deutsche Kolonialbestrebungen*, Elberfeld 1884, pp. 26-37.

offer endless opportunity for dispute' (*Vossische Zeitung*, 3 December 1884, morning edition, p. 1; *The Times*, 15 September 1884, p. 9). The European great powers did, of course, agree that it was necessary to prevent colonial expansionists from starting a local 'informal war' which, according to *The Economist*, would damage the peaceful development and exploitation of the Congo region (15 November 1884, pp. 1383 f.).

In order to prevent a trade war, Bismarck, who was mainly interested in gaining equal trading conditions for German industry, tried to persuade the British and French governments to recognize the principle of equal rights and solidarity in the Congo region, as in East Asia.³⁴ In view of the international economic crisis, his pragmatic policy of expansion was later described by historians as an 'anti-cyclical economy-stabilizing policy'.³⁵ The Steamer Subsidy Bill of May 1884, providing for state subsidies for mailboat communication with overseas countries, which Bismarck linked to colonial policy for electioneering reasons and brought before the budget commission in July 1884, is a good example of his strategy. His 'open-door policy' for the Congo region, which assumed a community of interests among trading nations, was, however, primarily directed against British claims, as a great power, to monopolize maritime, commercial, and colonial rights. In referring to the 'armed neutrality', pronounced by Persia against Great Britain in 1780 during the American War of Independence, Bismarck was speaking of an anti-British league of neutral nations.

Apart from the economic aspect, the domestic and socio-political function of colonial expansion was also a crucial point in Bismarck's strategy. Against the background of an 'ideological consensus' that had been developing since the end of the 1870s and used social imperialism and the export drive as a means of economic and social policy,³⁶ Bismarck, in the autumn 1884 election campaign, had employed colonial expansion as a means of political integration in the domestic party struggle. The issue of colonial expansion was to lead to a polarization between parties loyal to Bismarck—as the National Liberals, free Conservatives, and German Conservatives proved to be—and those that opposed Bismarck—the left liberal parties and the Social Democratic Party. The popular nationalist argument used in connection with this polarization once again provided an opportunity to label the opposition parties as enemies of the Reich. This strategy of exclusion, already implemented by the *Kulturkampf* of the 1870s and by the Anti-Socialist law of 1878, largely aimed to defend the social status quo against democratic tendencies and further parliamentarization. For tactical electioneering reasons Bismarck thus wished the Conference to be called before the October election.

With regard to the issue of British and French spheres of influence in the Congo and Niger regions, highlighted in Bismarck's three-point manifesto, British press reports concentrated on defending established and economic interests. The Whig *Economist's* declaration: 'We want trade, not territory', was the expression of a programme (29 November 1884, p. 1442). According to the Liberal conception of empire, whose fundamental principle was shared by the Conservatives, Great Britain's main concern was to protect existing spheres of influence, to open up new markets, and to avoid new

³⁴ Bismarck to Hatzfeldt, Varzin, 7 Aug. 1884, in J. Lepsius, A. Mendelsohn-Bartholdy, F. Thimme (eds.), *Die große Politik der Europäischen Kabinette 1871-1914: Sammlung der diplomatischen Akten des auswärtigen Amtes*, 40 vols., Berlin 1922-7, vol. 3, no. 680, pp.

413 f; also *Aktenstücke*, no. 11, pp. 17 f.

³⁵ For Bismarck's motives and strategy in colonial expansion see H. U. Wehler, *Bismarck und der Imperialismus*, München 1975, pp. 423-53.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 112-93.

commitments.³⁷ The British government, under pressure from the Whigs and the left Liberals around Chamberlain, used its claims to the lower Niger, which is justified by the fact that Britain had developed that market over the previous eighty years (for example, in Mungo Park's expedition) to demand separate treatment of the Niger as a precondition for British participation in the Conference. Gladstone and his colonial minister, Derby, had been in favour of internationalizing the Niger, but they were forced to yield to pressure from both factions. Opposition to an international control commission for the Niger, which was seen as an affront to British trade and British investment, was primarily directed against French protectionism, but it also aimed to exclude Germany from political control of the Niger. After Bismarck agreed, shortly before the beginning of the Conference, to a separate treatment of the Niger question, the British government showed itself firmly resolved on securing Britain's national interest in that region. Moreover, participating in the Conference was considered a means of gaining advantages for British trade.³⁸

In defence against the charge, made mainly by the German press, that Great Britain monopolized trade, the Whig *Observer* pointed out that the free trade traditionally guaranteed by Great Britain enabled foreign trading powers to profit from British annexations, (19 October 1884, p. 5). From this *The Economist* inferred an apparent identity of interests between Britain and Germany. In the course of the Conference this indeed turned out to be true *Economist*, (18 October 1884, pp. 1250 f.). But the fact that free trade continued to guarantee Great Britain's economic position and, indirectly, its political predominance in the Niger region was not openly mentioned in the British press.

The Liberals, following Gladstone's policy of disengagement successfully propagated in the 1880 election campaign—not least on account of the imminent 'snowball effect' of colonial conflicts (*Pall Mall Gazette*, 11 October 1884, p. 1)—regarded Britain as a saturated great power. Hence they supported the internationalization of the Congo region and the Niger, as proposed by Bismarck, in so far as it continued to guarantee free entry for British trade in the future (*Economist*, 19 October 1884, p. 5). The pro-Gladstone *Pall Mall Gazette's* warning against harbouring any illusions with regard to the issue of internationalization—such projects mostly foundered as a result of administration and military costs—illustrated British realism, founded on experience, in colonial policy (11 October 1884, p. 1).

Unlike the German and the British press, the French government recommended a limited definition of free trade for the Niger and for France's West African sphere of influence. While France would allow free trade on the Niger river and the Congo river, it was anxious to maintain its tariff autonomy in Gabon, Guinea, and Senegal.³⁹ Further, the Senegal and Ogowe rivers were to be excluded from the international regulations.⁴⁰ Since the French were unable to cope with British and German competition in their colonies, they feared disadvantages for their own economy.⁴¹ For

³⁷ *Scotsman*, 24 Dec. 1884, p. 6; *Pall Mall Gazette*, 1 Jan. 1885, p. 1; *Standard*, 11 October 1884, p. 5.

³⁸ Malet to Granville, Berlin, 23 Oct. 1884, in: PRO, FO 403/46, no. 64; Granville to Malet, London, 23 Oct. 1884, *ibid.*, no. 65; Minute Lister, London 14 Oct. 1884, no. 26.

³⁹ E. Engelhardt, 'Rapport dressé au Ministre des

affaires étrangères, in *Affaires du Congo et de l'Afrique occidentale* (1884/85), Paris 1885, p. 5, pp. 1-39.

⁴⁰ Note by Ferry, in *Documents diplomatiques français* (1871-1914) 1st series (1871-1900), 16 vols., Paris 1929-59, vol. 5, no. 376, pp. 377-81.

⁴¹ Courcel to Ferry, Berlin, 20 Nov. 1884 and 22 Nov. 1884, *ibid.*, no. 456, pp. 476 f.

this reason, the republican left, the centre (Opportunists), and the monarchist press all rejected France's displacement from the Niger without compensation.⁴² According to the conservative republican *Journal des débats*, France's 'sacrifice' entitled it to a trading monopoly on the middle and upper Niger: 'Why should we allow the whole of Europe to enter a house where we ourselves were sole occupants—at least as a great power?' *Journal des Débats* (4 December 1884, p. 1.) An internationalization of the Niger, affording British and German trade unhindered access to the African interior, was rejected as a threat to French economic interests and sovereignty (*France*, 5 December 1884, p. 1). Consequently France saw itself challenged by Germany and Great Britain, who advocated an extensive free trade policy. This resulted in a realignment of fronts among the three great powers.

After matters relating to the economy, the constellation of power in Europe and the relationship between the three great Western powers in particular was the other main subject of discussion in the press. In Germany this line was taken by the pro-Bismarck parties, the National Liberals, and the two Conservative parties. The establishment of a national state after the three wars of German unification in 1864, 1866, and 1870–1, had inspired a new national consciousness in Germany, which manifested itself in an excessive ideologization of great power politics. The Franco-Prussian war, which on the German side had produced the so-called 'Sedan complex', whose chief symptoms were national pride and the feeling of military strength, gave a decisive impetus to Germany's new nationalism. Germany's prestige as a great power had to be stabilized and extended.

The pro-Bismarck parties mainly saw the Conference as evidence of Germany's rise to the status of a European great power. The claim made by the Free Conservative *Post* that, as a result of Germany's initiative, the Conference would settle problems of worldwide significance already pointed to German aspirations to power extending beyond Europe (11 October 1884, p. 1). According to the *Vossische Zeitung*, the Conference, like the acquisition of colonies, had brought about a 'storm of patriotic fervour' as a result of the 'colonial craze' (1 May 1885, morning edition, p. 1). In addition, German commentaries associated the Conference with the principle of peaceful resolution of conflicts and balancing of interests. Although, according to the Free Conservatives, there were no serious disputes to be resolved in West Africa, conflicting interests between the colonial powers had to be smoothed over (*Post*, 16 November 1884, p. 1).

The National Liberals and the Catholic Centre claimed that the principle of peaceful resolution of conflicts associated with the Conference was the result of Bismarck's peace and policy and his skilful foreign policy.⁴³ In this sense too parallels were drawn between the Three-Kaiser Alliance of 1872 and the Three-Kaiser Meeting in Skierniewice in September 1884.⁴⁴ This identification helped to increase the attractiveness of Bismarck's foreign policy as well as his charisma which, during the period of fervent election campaigning in autumn 1884, was needed to consolidate and strengthen the position of the parties supporting Bismarck. The German left Liberals,

⁴² *Journal des débats*, 12 Oct. 1884, p. 1; *Figaro*, 29 Dec. 1884, p. 1; *Soleil*, 22 Dec. 1884, p. 1; *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 6 Nov. 1884, p. 1.

⁴³ *National Zeitung*, 15 Oct. 1884, p. 1; *Rheinisch-*

Westfälische Zeitung, 18 Nov. 1884, morning edn., p. 1; *Kölnische Volkszeitung*, 13 Dec. 1884, evening edn., p. 1.

⁴⁴ *Kölnische Volkszeitung*, *National Zeitung*, as n. 43 above.

on the other hand, whose social basis consisted of sections of the educated and property-owning bourgeoisie, the old urban and small-town middle classes, as well as white collar workers, emphasized the economic aspects of the Conference. Consequently, the sanctioning of free trade and expectations of well-nigh 'unlimited markets' were of the greatest interest to them (*Vossische Zeitung*, 15 November 1884, morning edition, p. 1).

In 1884 France and Germany reached a temporary agreement and *rapprochement*, lasting until Ferry's downfall in March 1885, on the question of colonial expansion. At the centre of this *rapprochement*, however, lay the constellation of power in Europe. The London Conference on Egypt and the Berlin Conference illustrate this clearly. Bismarck's strategy of isolating France, reconfirmed by the Triple Alliance of 1882, was accompanied from the early 1880s by a colonial diversion, whose aim was the neutralization of the Alsace-Lorraine question. Moreover, Bismarck saw co-operation with France as offering an opportunity to press his own claims against British supremacy in Africa and in the Pacific. This anti-British thrust was to be secured by the fact that France, the second largest naval power, together with Germany, formed a counterweight to Great Britain.⁴⁵

Against this background the National Liberals also overemphasized the importance of the Conference with regard to the Franco-German *rapprochement* which, for electioneering reasons, was described as a turning point in bilateral relations. But since the *rapprochement* was, on both sides, an act of diplomacy and *realpolitik* that was greeted with strong resentment and animosity by the public of both countries, most parties in Germany were sceptical. Although the Franco-German 'understanding' was welcomed as diplomatically significant, objections were raised. The Catholic Centre newspaper, the *Kölnische Volkszeitung*, was afraid of an increase in French 'covetousness resulting from Germany's benevolent attitude' 19 January 1885, evening edition, p. 1). The left liberal *Frankfurter Zeitung*, considered that French 'protective tariffs' prevented any community of interests (2 December 1884, morning edition, p. 1; 23 December 1884, evening edition, p. 1). For this reason the German Conservatives, together with the National Liberals and the left Liberals demanded an uncompromising policy of promoting German interests against French protectionism. However, this did not prevent the left Liberals and the Centre from welcoming the *rapprochement*, which lasted only a few months, as a means of 'smoothing over existing differences and pushing into the background all thoughts of a war of reprisal' (*Germania*, 14 October 1884, morning edition, p. 1).

The British press evaluated the Franco-German *rapprochement* realistically. According to the conservative *Standard*, only political amateurs could speak of an alliance (31 December 1884, p. 5). The pro-Gladstone *Pall Mall Gazette* also saw it as a temporary phenomenon without any real basis (12 December 1884, p. 1). Nevertheless, British Conservatives and Whigs admired Bismarck's strategy. He was trying to safeguard the results of the Franco-Prussian war by supporting the diversion of French hegemonial interests into colonial expansion (*Scotsman*, 16 October 1884, p. 4; *Globe*, 17 October 1884, p. 4). Because of its ephemeral and limited character the Franco-German

⁴⁵ Cf. N. Rich, M. H. Fisher, and W. Frauendienst (eds.), *Die geheimen Papiere Friedrich von Holsteins*, Göttingen 1956-63, 4 vols., vol. 2: *Tagebuchblätter*,

Göttingen 1957, p. 168; Bismarck to Hatzfeldt, Varzin, 7 Aug. 1884, in *Große Politik*, vol. 3, no. 680, p. 413.

rapprochement made no change in the European balance of power, but it improved the German and French negotiating position *vis-à-vis* Great Britain. On the other hand, it intensified rivalry between the British and the French in West Africa by encouraging France to pursue its own interests more strongly.

Relations between Germany and Britain had deteriorated in 1884 as a result both of greater competition for markets and trading positions, especially in the Pacific and South West Africa, and of the Anglophobia propagated by the pro-Bismarck parties in the election campaign of that year.⁴⁶ The Free Conservatives and the National Liberals in particular expressed Germany's claim to great power status, justifying it, to a large extent, in crudely nationalist terms. The strategy of isolation that Bismarck had practised in relation to France was now to be turned against Britain, in order to force Britain to give in to German demands for expansion and hegemony. By aggressively laying claim to Germany's equality among the great powers, the National Liberals in particular only confirmed Germany in its role of parvenu among the colonial powers (*Kölnische Zeitung*, 2 November 1884, morning edition, p. 1).

To safeguard German trade in West Africa from 'interference by English politics' (*Kölnische Volkszeitung*, 14 September 1884, evening edition, p. 1; *Kölnische Zeitung*, 30 December 1884, evening edition, p. 1), the German press considered it necessary to oppose 'English covetousness' (*Frankfurter Zeitung*, 10 December 1884, morning edition, p. 1), the 'national self-interest' (*National Zeitung*, 15 February 1885, morning edition, p. 1) as well as the 'jealousy' of the old colonial powers (*Kölnische Zeitung*, 1 January 1885, morning edition, p. 1). Great Britain was accused of pursuing a one-sided policy of economic interest: 'Free trade wherever it suited England most, and protective tariffs wherever they were most profitable for England' (*Kölnische Zeitung*, 20 November 1884, evening edition, p. 1). Although the German Conservative and the left liberal press still had to concede to Great Britain the role of a world trading power, it welcomed the opportunities a conference would offer to limit, on a political and diplomatic level, British monopolistic claims (*Vossische Zeitung*, 6 December 1884, morning edition, p. 1; *Neue Preussische Zeitung*, 7 December 1884, p. 1). Only left liberal trading circles interested in export issued a realistic warning that the consequences of an anti-British coalition and exaggerated Anglophobia would, in the end, damage German trade (*Frankfurter Zeitung*, 19 October 1884, morning edition, p. 1).

In 1884-5 the Egyptian question, the conflict with Russia over Afghanistan and the South Africa problem were the main concerns of British foreign policy. Domestic policy was dominated by the discussion of electoral reform initiated by Gladstone, which served to cover up the sterility of the legislative period as well as to distract attention from the failures of his government's foreign policy. The Conservative press in particular made the accusation that Gladstone's foreign policy had contributed to the loss of British supremacy. For the *Standard*, the Conference was 'in some occult manner, the handwriting on the wall announcing the downfall of the English Colonial Empire' (18 October 1884, p. 4). In a similar vein, the Whig *Scotsman* interpreted the Conference as an indication of the loss of Britain's monopoly on world trade (16 October 1884, p. 4).

The Franco-German *rapprochement*, and the German National Liberals' anti-British stance associated with it, inspired a feeling of isolation from Europe among British

⁴⁶ Regarding the election campaign see Wehler, *Bismarck*, pp. 474-85.

parties. This fear, openly expressed by the radical *Echo*, demonstrated Great Britain's defensive stance in the European power struggle, which even arrogance could hardly disguise (29 December 1884, p. 2). Whereas the pro-Gladstone *Manchester Guardian* regarded the Conference as an unsuccessful attempt to strike a blow at Britain's prestige, the *Scotsman* interpreted Britain's exclusion from the European concert as a challenge to Britain to stand up unreservedly for its own interests (*Manchester Guardian*, 20 January 1885; *Scotsman*, 26 December 1884, p. 4). But the Liberals all agreed that an uncoordinated foreign and colonial policy presented the real danger. It could lead to precipitate intervention, which would dissipate Great Britain's military strength and, at the same time, weaken it both economically and militarily.

Unlike the German Reich, Great Britain, which recognized Germany as the leading continental power, was interested in relaxing tensions. This must be seen in the context of the unresolved Egyptian question. Moreover, Germany's attitude to free trade in the colonies was a strong reason for the overwhelmingly positive reaction to German colonial expansion. On the one hand, *The Times* conceded that the world was big enough for German and British colonial expansion (12 January 1885, p. 9). On the other hand, it was frequently argued that Germany had a right to acquire colonies and to establish a 'German Empire outre mer' (*Globe*, 10 January 1885, p. 4). It was pointed out that the establishment of a German 'India' in Africa could be seen as a contribution to Europe's civilizing mission (*Spectator*, 20 December 1884, p. 1690).⁴⁷ Finally, the *Scotsman* relied on Bismarck's belief that Germany had more to lose than to win in a conflict with Great Britain (*Scotsman*, 5 January 1885, p. 4).

The ultra-conservative *Globe* was an outsider in that it concentrated on power politics and economic rivalry, and viewed Great Britain's submission as a sign of weakness (12 January 1885, p. 4). According to the *Globe*, Bismarck's aim was to strike a blow at Great Britain's prestige, interests, and *amour propre* all over the world, and to drive a wedge between Great Britain and France (30 December 1884, p. 4). The Egyptian question and the Franco-Chinese war were a springboard to this strategy, as the French blockade of the Chinese coast damaged British trade interests. By and large, however, confidence in Britain's position as a political and economic world power remained unshaken among both Liberals and Conservatives.

In the British press, Franco-British relations figured much less prominently than did relations between Germany and Britain. *The Times* conceded that Africa offered enough scope for French colonial expansion too (12 December 1884, p. 9). The other object of criticism, apart from protectionism, was French territorial claims in West Africa, which were rejected as far less justified even than Portuguese claims to the west bank of the lower Congo (*Manchester Guardian*, 26 November 1884, p. 5; *Globe*, 1 December 1884, p. 3). Like the German press, the British press also criticized French national pride as exaggerated *amour propre* (*Economist*, 4 October 1884, p. 1191). For this reason France's position in West Africa was based more on emotion than on an effective presence (*Observer*, 12 December 1884, p. 5).

Criticism in the French newspapers was directed almost exclusively at Great Britain's claims to a colonial monopoly. Like the Germans, the *République française* accused the British of 'l'incurable et naïf égoïsme de ses appétits d'annexion coloniale'

⁴⁷ Cf. also *Spectator*, 17 Jan. 1885, p. 73; *Times*, 10 Oct. 1884, p. 7; *Daily News*, 31 Dec. 1884, p. 4; *Times*, 12 Jan. 1885, p. 9.

(18 November 1884, p. 1). The moment France started to stir in the vicinity of the Congo, the Niger, or in Tonking, the British would get upset and deny them their right to colonial power (*Figaro*, 27 December 1884, p. 1). But on the whole, French press reports indicated France's interest in maintaining good relations with Great Britain. Ferry in no way wanted the *rapprochement* with Germany to be seen as an anti-British alliance.⁴⁸

The Congo question was of little significance in France's overall foreign policy interests. The conflict of interests between France and Britain in Egypt and the Tonking war took precedence. This war had come about despite the Treaty of Tientsin concluded between France and China in May 1884. The Tonking question precipitated a domestic crisis in France, because France's high claims for compensation led to an escalation of the conflict, and the Ferry government required Parliament to finance further military action. Mindful of the parliamentary elections due to take place in 1885, the Monarchists, Radicals, and Socialists recognized in this situation an opportunity to weaken the ruling Opportunist faction.

France, isolated as a result of Bismarck's alliances, found its isolation increased even further by the Three-Kaiser Meeting at Skierniewice. The fact that France was a republic was an advantage for Bismarck's strategy *vis-à-vis* the conservative monarchies of Austria-Hungary and Russia. What France feared above all was that Russia and Austria would guarantee the 1871 Frankfurt Treaty, which would result in loss of Alsace-Lorraine.⁴⁹ Bismarck complied with the French request for compensation over the Egyptian question, because of the unstable basis of Ferry's government and the unpopularity of Franco-German co-operation. This was decisive in securing Ferry's agreement for the Franco-German *rapprochement* as a precondition for the Conference.⁵⁰ However, this balance of interests was based solely on non-binding and vague promises on the German side, which did nothing to reduce French mistrust. Indeed, it was reinforced when Bismarck told the French ambassador, de Courcel, in November 1884, that he was unwilling to risk falling out with Great Britain by unequivocally taking France's side in the Egyptian question.⁵¹ On the one hand, their mutual interest in expanding trade and removing Great Britain's economic supremacy provided the basis for a community of interests between France and Germany. On the other hand, the French government wanted, from the start, to limit co-operation to specific issues. Their common interests were not sufficient to support a bilateral agreement, and it would not have been ratified by the French parliament unless Germany had conceded a revision of the Frankfurt Treaty.⁵²

In France, as in Germany, the Conference and the Franco-German *rapprochement* associated with it were reported in the context of the general election. Unlike in Germany, however, both events were extensively criticized due to the broad spectrum of anticolonialism in French politics (Legitimists, Orleanists, Radicals, and Socialists),

⁴⁸ Ferry to Raindre, Paris, 8 Nov. 1885, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 446, pp. 464-6.

⁴⁹ Courcel to Billot, Berlin, 15 Sept. 1884, *Ddf*, pp. 413 f.

⁵⁰ Herbert von Bismarck to Chancellor von Bismarck, Paris, 6 Oct. 1884, in *Große Politik*, vol. 3, no. 694, pp. 431-9; Courcel to Ferry, Berlin, 15 Aug. 1884, *Ddf*, vol. 5, no. 366, pp. 368 f.; Ferry to Courcel, Paris, 15

Aug. 1884, *ibid.*, no. 367, pp. 369-75.

⁵¹ Courcel to Ferry, Berlin, 12 Nov. 1884, *ibid.*, no. 450, pp. 469 f.

⁵² Bismarck to Busch, Varzin, 30 Aug. 1884, in *Große Politik*, vol. 3, no. 688, pp. 424-6; Hohenlohe to Bismarck, Paris, 23 Aug. 1884, *ibid.*, no. 686, pp. 420 ff. See also S. Kanya-Forstner's contribution in this volume.

and to deeply rooted anti-German stereotypes. Forced on to the defensive by crises in colonial policy and criticism of colonialism, the pro-Ferry press appealed for foreign policy not to be subjected to the same mechanisms as domestic policy, suggesting that national considerations should take precedence over a policy of party interests. It canvassed for a politically realistic course *vis-à-vis* Germany. Such a course should exploit specific areas of common interest and endorse diplomatic agreements made for a particular purpose. Again and again it pointed out that no alliance had been concluded between Germany and France, and that consequently, France's scope for initiative in foreign policy was not limited (*Temps*, 10 October 1884, p. 1; *République française*, 11 October 1884, p. 1). The national argument was central to all political camps, and especially to the monarchists, because the idea of the French national state, and the striving for hegemony connected with it, had an integrative function in French domestic politics.

Monarchists and Radicals criticized the *rapprochement* as the result of a policy of surrender and 'capitulation' (*Lanterne*, 2 October 1884, p. 1). They accused Ferry of degrading France to the status of a 'République prussianisée' and 'vasall' of Germany by acknowledging Germany's claims to hegemony (*Gazette de France*, 17 October 1884, p. 1; 21 October 1884, p. 1). Instead of strengthening France's position in Europe, they argued, he had weakened it by preventing alternative alliances from emerging (*Lanterne*, 2 October 1884, p. 1; *Gazette de France*, 26 August 1884, p. 1). All that was conceded was that the Franco-German *entente* reduced the risk of war in Europe. Instead, however, it increased the possibility of conflict with Great Britain on other continents (*Monde*, 14 October 1884, p. 1). According to the pro-Clemenceau *Justice* and the pro-Orleanist *Soleil*, Bismarck had sown discord between France and Great Britain, only to gain the greatest advantage from the situation for himself (*Justice*, 11 August 1884; *Soleil*, 11 October 1884, p. 1). The Orleanists' accusation that, by co-operating in the matter of the Conference, Ferry had promoted Germany to the status of a European, indeed a global, arbiter, shows the extent to which aspirations for hegemony were firmly established among the Monarchists (*Soleil*, 18 October 1884, p. 1). Opponents of Ferry's colonial and foreign policies agreed that continental policy was the first priority. Like the supporters of the liberal disengagement policy in Britain, they argued that France's policy of colonial expansion dissipated defence resources and burdened the national budget with unprofitable expenditures. The rejection of demands for revenge by Ferry's Opportunists was interpreted as a lack of patriotism (*Monde*, 14 October 1884, p. 1; *Gazette de France*, 26 August 1884, p. 1). According to the Radical *Intransigeant*, Ferry had taken down the French flag in Africa to make room for the Germans (30 September 1884, p. 1). In the eyes of the Monarchists, France, as the second largest naval power and leading European land power, not only had to play a decisive role in the European balance of power but also in the 'équilibre universel', as France 'too should shine all over the world including beyond the ocean' (*Gazette de France*, 19 August 1884, p. 1).

The Conference, originally fixed to last for only a few weeks, was protracted as a result of territorial disputes between France, Portugal, and the AIA, so that by November, according to the *Scotsman*, newspaper readers were already bound to be bored by it (4 November 1884, p. 4). As confidentiality of negotiation is the essence of diplomacy, the minutes of discussions were at first kept strictly secret. On 1 December 1884 the delegates, on the recommendation of the chairman, Count Hatzfeldt, decided

to publish the official minutes, in order to avoid misinforming the public. The official gazette commenced on 3 December. This enabled the press to give detailed coverage of the Conference. The German press devoted a great deal of attention to the progress of the Conference because of its importance within the framework of Bismarck's foreign, colonial, and economic policies. In particular the *Norddeutsche allgemeine Zeitung* and the *Vossische Zeitung* published extracts from the minutes, often without comment. Because of the technical nature of the actual proceedings, newspaper commentaries in all three countries featured the preliminary discussions prior to the Conference.

The AIA proved to be the unqualified success story of the Conference. Leopold II had already profited from the failure of the Anglo-Portuguese treaty in that it led to the formal recognition of the AIA flag. The USA began by acknowledging the AIA flag in April 1884, thus enabling the AIA to acquire the status of a friendly nation. Germany followed in November. By the end of the Conference all the participant states had recognized the AIA as a sovereign state by means of special treaties.⁵³

Leopold's free state system was based on the idea of a state consisting of trading stations, whose sole proprietor was a company under his leadership. Using treaties of protection, he succeeded in acquiring sovereignty from African chiefs, while leaving their independence nominally untouched.⁵⁴ Stanley, who according to the conservative *Standard*, had as good as sold off the Congo, presented AIA as a guarantor of peaceful jurisdiction and stability in the interests of civilization and trade (*Standard*, 17 December 1884, p. 4). This publicity campaign was aimed at conferring a new sovereign status on the AIA by means of international recognition, and with it the right to participate in the Conference. This also meant that the AIA's borders were defined and recognized.

At the Conference Bismarck supported sanctioning the AIA, because it matched his own concept of a free trade chartered company. Bismarck's idea was that the AIA, modelled on the British Borneo Company, would possess its own sovereign rights, giving it public jurisdiction over its area. Apart from its obligations to develop and administer the territory, the AIA had the right to undertake its own economic enterprises, that, is to exploit the region. The fact that this was already an outmoded concept, incapable of preventing problems of local control and the resulting colonial crises, had become apparent by 1881, as the British Borneo Company's experience showed.⁵⁵

Bismarck saw the AIA as the executor, as it were, of Conference decisions, who would guarantee free trade in the heart of the conventional zone.⁵⁶ On the other hand, he also saw it as a buffer against expansion by Great Britain and France in this region. For this reason the pro-Bismarck press was unreservedly positive in its comments. Above all, the AIA's rare 'selflessness' was lauded, as was the fact that it did not aspire to political power in the Congo and did not represent 'individual interests' (*National Zeitung*, 22 November 1884, morning edition, p. 1; 17 December 1884, evening edition, p. 2). In its treaties of protection it had committed itself 'to represent in Europe

⁵³ Cf. *Protocoles et Acte Général de la Conférence de Berlin 1884-1885*, appendix, in: *Staatsarchiv Bremen*, cf. R. J. Gavin, J. A. Betley (eds.), *The Scramble for Africa: Documents on the Berlin West African Conference and Related Subjects 1884/85*, Ibadan 1973, pp. 128-301.

⁵⁴ J. Stengers, 'King Leopold and Anglo-French Rivalry', 1882-4, in Gifford and Louis, *France and*

Britain, pp. 121-66.

⁵⁵ Regarding Chartered Companies cf. the article by J. Flint in this volume.

⁵⁶ *Neue Preussische Zeitung*, 4 Feb. 1885, p. 1; 11 Feb. 1885, p. 1; *Vossische Zeitung*, 24 Aug. 1884, morning edn. p. 1.

the interests of the Africans' (*Neue Preußische Zeitung*, 23 November 1884, p. 1). Finally, France was urged to agree to the AIA's territorial claims, since, if it did not, it would hinder the creation of the free state (*Vossische Zeitung*, 24 December 1884, evening edition, p. 1).

Criticism concentrated on the possibility of realizing the concept of a free state and on the question of financing it. Only the left-liberal *Frankfurter Zeitung* and the Social Democratic *Berliner Volksblatt* were sceptical about this 'free-state experiment' (*Berliner Volksblatt*, 3 August 1884, supplement). They were critical of the fact that the AIA's 'desk-heroes' had been granted an enormous territory solely on the basis of vague declarations and promises (*Frankfurter Zeitung*, 14 November 1884, morning edition, p. 1; 6 November 1884, morning edition, p. 1). As they realistically acknowledged, Central Africa was not another India, and therefore high investments were necessary for the economic development of this huge territory, which covered one tenth of black Africa (*Weser Zeitung*, 6 January 1885, morning edition, p. 1). The German Conservative Party, as the party of the East Elbian Junkers, conceded that these considerations were justified to the extent that the AIA had no income of its own as free trade regulations prohibited import tariffs for the new twenty years. In public recognition of the free state, however, they saw a possibility of developing new sources of revenue for the AIA (*Neue Preußische Zeitung*, 27 November 1884, p. 1).

Like the German left Liberals, British Liberals as well as Conservatives were critical. At the Foreign Office, in particular, there were no illusions about the AIA, whose treaties with African chiefs already revealed monopoly interests.⁵⁷ Though the AIA had an effective lobby in the Anti-Slavery Society and the Congo District Defence Association, which consisted mainly of organized Liverpool trading circles, this lobby was not particularly influential in the British Foreign Office's decision to recognize the AIA. The strong representation of the AIA's interests in Berlin left the British delegation no other alternative.⁵⁸ The Liberal *Daily Chronicle* optimistically announced that, in the end, it did not matter who guaranteed free trade in the Congo Basin (4 December 1884, p. 4).

Both party camps referred to the high cost of administering the colonies: 'Even the most sanguine estimate of the productiveness of the endowment fund of the International Association would scarcely cover the expenses of civilised government and outlay on public works throughout so vast a region.'⁵⁹ Similar criticism was voiced by the French press. According to the Legitimist *Gazette de France*, the philanthropic facade was blatant hypocrisy (24 February 1885, p. 3). Its success was due solely to energetic intervention by Bismarck, for whom it was instrumental in procuring a colonial policy for Germany (*Gazette de France*, 17 December 1884, p. 1). In Great Britain only the socialists made a point of criticizing the AIA as an institution for the capitalistic exploitation of the Africans which would transform them into nominally paid slaves (*Justice*, 27 September 1884, p. 4).

Competing expansionist and economic interests also led the French press to criticize the illusions on which the free state was founded. *Figaro's* parody comparing this act to

⁵⁷ Cf. R. Louis, 'Sir Percy Anderson's Grand African Strategy, 1883-1896', in *English Historical Review*, 81 (1966), pp. 292-314, here pp. 296-7.

expectations see also J. Bright's speech in *Hansard*, 3 Apr. 1883, column 1290 f.

⁵⁸ R. Anstey, *Britain and the Congo in the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford 1962, pp. 183 f.; regarding illusory

⁵⁹ *Manchester Guardian*, 4 Dec. 1884, p. 5; *Standard*, 15 Nov. 1884, p. 5; *Saint James's Gazette*, 2 Jan. 1885, p. 3.

the founding of the USA is representative of the attitude of the French press. According to this parody, 40 million Africans were to provide an experimental ground for European parliamentary strategies. Only the large number of Africans prevented the dream of a United States of Africa from becoming a reality (*Figaro*, 14 August 1884, p. 2). In a similar vein the point was made that Leopold's real power base in the Congo was a collection of wooden huts (*Intransigent*, 10 November 1884, p. 1).

The most detailed summaries were given in the German press. Unlike during the period of diplomatic preparation when, for electioneering reasons, political considerations were of primary importance to the German bourgeois parties, the actual proceedings showed more and more clearly that the Conference was effectively a trade conference. The General Act was therefore mainly judged in terms of its significance for world trade. For the National Liberals it was a success because it secured 'tariff immunity by international treaty for the immense market of the African interior' and guaranteed German exports stability 'of a kind that up to now only England had enjoyed in its own colonies' (*Rheinisch-Westfälische Zeitung*, 25 January 1885, p. 1). These export expectations could continue to be used in the domestic struggle against the attitude, labelled as pedantic, of the left Liberals and the Catholic centre.

The establishing of German trade interests against British monopoly claims was seen by all parties—with the exception of the Social Democrats—as an expression of the increase in German strength and prestige. The pro-Bismarck parties had proved to be the main advocates of economic and political competition against Great Britain, who would be shown that she 'was dealing with a power that was not to be trifled with . . . and that now was also determined to make its influence felt overseas' (*Vossische Zeitung*, 16 December 1884, morning edition, p. 1). For these proponents of power politics ideology the Conference confirmed not only Germany's position as a great power, but also its international status as a colonial power. Only the left Liberals and Social Democrats rejected the ideology of power and politics and expansionism. All the same, the left liberal *Vossische Zeitung* saw the Conference as marking a 'turning point in the history of colonial politics' (*Vossische Zeitung*, 16 December 1884, morning edition, p. 1). Germany's position as the leading continental power had guaranteed the 'harmonious' course of the Conference (*Vossische Zeitung*, 21 February 1885, evening edition, p. 1).

In Germany only the left Liberals reacted sceptically to the calculatedly optimistic predictions that the rivalry of interests between the colonial powers had been resolved as a result of the Conference. For the *Frankfurter Zeitung* it was really open to question whether Bismarck could continue to play the role of 'honest broker' once Germany itself was engaged in colonial politics (27 February 1885, morning edition, p. 1). The British Liberals reacted in a similar vein, because the conflict between free trade and protectionism, that is, between competing export interests, had not been resolved. In the course of time the General Act would be considered merely an expression of goodwill. The breakdown of international agreement was attributed in particular to Germany's unrestrained pursuit of a policy of self-interest (*Manchester Guardian*, 26 February 1885, p. 5).

But the assessment of the Conference as a whole was generally positive in the British press too. For *The Times* it was a triumph for the English principle of free trade (18 February 1885, p. 9). On the other hand, the establishment of the AIA was criticized

for its hostility to British commercial enterprise. According to *The Economist*, only firms already established in the Congo would benefit from the free state regulations, while small commercial enterprises were given few opportunities to establish themselves. Above all the Portuguese dependencies on the north bank of the Congo threatened to provide greater competition for the Liverpool trading companies (*Economist*, 28 February 1885, p. 251). For the ultra-conservative *Globe*, the Conference implied a renunciation of Britain's supremacy in West and Central Africa, whereas the development and civilizing of these areas should have been the sole right of Great Britain (*Globe*, 18 February 1885, p. 4). The peaceful exchange of views on economic, administrative, and humanitarian matters could not hide the fact of national egoism since each power was prepared to permit only minimal concessions (*Manchester Guardian*, 14 February 1885, p. 7). The *Scotsman* pointed out that, despite the 'palaver' in Berlin, 'the "scramble for Africa" in Berlin is hotter than ever; it is every man for himself, and the black man for all' (6 February 1885, p. 4).

Overall assessments of the Conference were given in the French press—which may be seen as an indication of disappointment about the political outcome, even though France had achieved recognition both of its interests in the Upper Niger region and of Brazza's territorial acquisitions. Against the background of the Franco-German *rapprochement*, criticism mainly concentrated on Ferry's renunciation of revenge for Alsace-Lorraine and the revival of France's continental hegemony. According to the Legitimist *Figaro*, Ferry had not seen through Bismarck's image of promoting peace as the façade of a man who had been responsible for the biggest wars of the times. It suggested that Bismarck's abrupt transformation from hawk to dove within so brief a period of time was improbable (*Figaro*, 21 February 1885, p. 2). In contrast to German and British coverage, the French press also gave very little information on the proceedings of the Conference. It did not deal with humanitarian questions. On the whole, the French coverage illustrates the narrow political basis of Ferry's colonial policy, and the pre-eminence of Continental European issues.

The Conference can be seen as an expression of competing and balancing interest policies on an economic as well as a political level. The international economic crisis motivated the three great European powers in particular to regulate international rivalry and competition in trade policy. Moreover, global commercial expansionism pointed to the necessity for preventive mechanism in the regulation of conflicts. As the comments of the pro-Bismarck parties, the British Conservatives, the Whigs, and the French Monarchists had already shown, the attempt, based on trade illusions, to achieve an international balance of interests was bound to founder in the long term against the insuperable hurdle of national self-interest. By the late 1880s it was already becoming apparent that the economic objectives formulated during the Conference were failing. Therefore, a peaceful regulation of conflicts of interest and a settlement of hegemonial differences between the three big powers could be achieved only partially for a limited period of time.

At the same time—as is clear from the press coverage in all three countries—the Conference was evidence of the Europeanization and internationalization of the colonial question. The colonies began to be integrated into the European power system by being used not only for the maintenance or transformation of the constellation of power in Europe but also—as the exploitation of colonial expansion in the election

campaign of 1884 in Germany and 1885 in France shows—in order to polarize domestic policy and secure loyalty. On the other hand, the idea of internationalizing equatorial Africa constituted an attempt to extend the balance of power in Europe to Africa. As the Egyptian question perfectly demonstrates, conflicts at the periphery subsequently had repercussions in Europe. Thus non-European conflicts increasingly determined the balance of power in Europe.

The commentaries of the German newspapers and the pro-Ferry press in France suggest that the Conference can also be seen as evidence of a desire for peace that had emerged in both countries since the Franco-Prussian war. For this time, this war had claimed an unusually high number of lives in relation to its duration and it had also proved very costly. The principle of consensual resolution as a means of settling conflicts peacefully, associated with the Conference, was seen by the British Liberals, the republican centre in France, the German left Liberals and Social Democrats as generally representing progress in international relations. But this assessment was not free of an optimism that can be attributed to the political situation. As advocates of a policy of negotiation in international matters, the Social Democrats enthusiastically welcomed the Conference's preventive method of settling conflicts (*Berliner Volksblatt*, 21 October 1884, p. 1). Their positive expectations made clear, however, the problems that assessing foreign policy posed for a party which, as a movement of social emancipation, was interested first and foremost in domestic policy. The German Conservatives and National Liberals also welcomed the preventive peace strategy endorsed by the Conference. In contrast to the Social Democrats, however, they praised it as a result of Bismarck's political genius (*Rheinisch-Westfälische Zeitung*, 18 November 1884, morning edition, p. 1). They also associated it with power political interests and the maintenance of the status quo.

The similarity in the views expressed by such different political camps reflects the popularity of the idea of international arbitration which aimed at resolving international problems in a juridical manner. The reason for this was the increasingly international involvement of national economics systems, the consequent development of crises on an international level, and the general tendency to co-ordinate acts of foreign policy. German left Liberals ~~was~~ as well as Social Democrats supported arbitration as introducing the concept of legality into foreign policy. For the Social Democrats, who included this point in their Erfurt manifesto of 1891, the obligatory existence of an arbitration court—against the background of the restrictive domestic conditions imposed by the Anti-Socialist Law—was a means of thwarting the idea of national power politics (*Berliner Volksblatt*, 21 October 1884, p. 1). In the final analysis, a change in the international constellation of power was to be achieved by giving small states equal rights with the great powers. This democratic concept was also in keeping with domestic demands, made by German and British left Liberals as well as by Social Democrats, that foreign and military policy be subject to democratic control.

The dominant element of continuity was the tradition of classical congress diplomacy and of the concert of Europe, as was underlined not only by the pro-Bismarck parties, but also by both party camps in Great Britain. The idealized concept of balance of power in Europe had already been tarnished by conflicts in continental Europe—such as the German-Danish war of 1864, the Austro-Prussian war of 1866, and the Franco-Prussian war of 1870—as well as by imperialist expansion in Egypt

and in Turkey.⁶⁰ This process of erosion was intensified by an initial wave of protectionism, starting in the late 1870s, which assumed the character of a tariff war. The tendency of collective imperialism to resolve conflict multilaterally and to have the solutions backed up by a large number of states—a tendency which had already emerged during the Morocco conflict—was in keeping with the tradition of the concert of Europe. One result, however, was that non-binding declarations of intent were made, as the General Act had already made clear. Consequently the Berlin Conference stood at the point of intersection between traditional congress diplomacy and preventive settlement of international conflicts of interest in a period of worsening crises.

⁶⁰ Cf. C. J. Bartlett, *The Global Conflict: The International Rivalry of the Great Powers, 1880-1970*, London-New York 1984, pp. 4-34.

D

African Reactions to Imperial Invasion

'Many Questions—Some Answers': African Resistance in West Africa¹—A General View

MICHAEL CROWDER

At the time of the Berlin Conference of 1884–5, which we are here commemorating, few peoples in West Africa had any experience of occupation by the European invaders let alone resistance to them. With the exception of the riverine penetration of the French along the Senegal to Bamako on the Niger, Europeans had mere footholds on the coast, some like Lagos achieved by conquest, others like Sierra Leone achieved by negotiation. (See map II above.) Except in the Senegal valley and its hinterland the Europeans had not yet manifested themselves to African peoples and states as *the* major military threat to their independence. Many states were more immediately concerned with the problems posed by their neighbours than with the potential menace represented by 'explorers', missionaries, and traders who had sojourned among them as friends,² but were in the event to prove forerunners of a conquest that within the next twenty-five years would subjugate most of West Africa to effective European rule.

The widespread military resistance to the imposition of colonial rule that took place over the quarter century following the Berlin Conference had gained relatively little attention from historians before 1970: the pioneer work in this field had been done in East and Central Africa.³ Since then a considerable number of studies have drawn attention, directly or indirectly, to the fact that resistance to colonial occupation in West Africa was not only more widespread than the colonial historiography allowed, but that the military quality of that resistance was considerably more sophisticated than depicted in the conventional portraits of ill-disciplined hordes falling easy prey to the superior tactics and weaponry of the European armies.⁴

What then is new to study in the field of West African resistance to the European military occupation?

This introduction to the case studies on West African resistance in this volume will suggest that there are still many questions that need to be asked about the resistance that took place during the crucial twenty-five years in West Africa history from 1885–1910 and that some questions which have been already asked and answered need to be asked again. It is specifically concerned only with the resistance of African armies

¹ West Africa is used here in the contemporary sense to denote the region lying between Cape Verde and the Cameroon Mountains rather than as it was used at the Berlin West Africa Conference to cover the coastline from Cape Verde to the Cape of Good Hope.

² See H. Brunschwig, 'De la résistance africaine à l'impérialisme européen', in *Journal of African History*, 15 (1974), pp. 47–64, p. 49.

³ e.g. T. Ranger, 'Connections between "Primary Resistance" Movements and Modern Mass Nationalism in East and Central Africa', in *Journal of African History*, 9 (1968) Part 1, pp. 437–53 and Part 2, pp. 631–41.

⁴ See the case studies in M. Crowder (ed.), *West African Resistance: The Military Response to Colonial Occupation*, London 1971.

to the invading military forces of the European powers, not resistance to colonial rule once it had been effectively rather than nominally established.⁵

1. THE SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONQUEST AND RESISTANCE : THE NEED FOR RE-VALUATION

Since Kanya-Forstner's distinguished study of the French conquest of the Western Sudan, published in 1969,⁶ studies of the occupation of West Africa have been more concerned with the impact of the conquest and the resistance to it than with the tactics and strategies used by the invaders. Indeed Obaro Ikime's *The Fall of Nigeria: The British Conquest* is, for instance, more instructive about the tactics used by Nigerians to resist the British conquest than on the nature of the British conquest itself.⁷ We in fact derive relatively little from it that is new about the way British commanders, both at headquarters and in the field, made their tactical decisions and adapted or failed to adapt strategies in response to the reaction of those they sought to conquer.⁸ Yet there is a symbiotic relationship between any two armies that are opposed to each other in the field, and future studies of African military resistance should be more aware of this. The military records of the invaders have been sifted to see what they reveal about African tactics and the nature of African military organization, as this author and La Ray Denzer did in the case of Bai Bureh of Sierra Leone fifteen years ago.⁹ They need now to be reviewed for what they can reveal about the response of European military commanders to the strategies of their opponents.

Since of its very nature 'resistance' is a response to a given situation, it is important to ask whether there were substantive differences between the modes of conquest of the different invading powers—Britain, France, Germany, and Portugal—and whether these differences, if they are indeed significant, can help us understand the nature of the subsequent colonial dispensation. There have been unnumerable studies of the differences or otherwise between French and British methods of administration and the African response to them, but almost no comparative work has been done on the conquest itself.¹⁰ Again there were differences in the modes of occupation by soldiers of the same colonial power who may or may not have approached the business of colonial

⁵ For instance Bai Bureh's war against the British in Sierra Leone in 1898 is best considered as resistance to the imposition of effective colonial rule rather than a rising against the established colonial state, though nominally Bai Bureh was under British protection at the time of his rising. Indeed after his defeat and capture it was proposed to try him for treason, but this was questioned by the Colonial Office, and it was eventually concluded that he had not committed treason since he owed no allegiance to the Queen. See PRO CO/267/441 Telegram from Governor to Secretary of State 16 Nov. 1898 and ff.

⁶ A. S. Kanya-Forstner, *The Conquest of the Western Sudan: A Study in French Military Imperialism*, Cambridge 1969.

⁷ O. Ikime *The Fall of Nigeria: The British Conquest*, London 1977.

⁸ In this connection the recently published collection of

documents, *Nigeria and its British Invaders, 1851-1920*, New York and Enugu 1984, compiled by J. U. J. Asiegbu is a great disappointment. Its introduction represents no advance on Ikime, if anything the reverse, whilst little attempt is made in the prefaces to the documents to analyse them.

⁹ L. R. Denzer and M. Crowder, 'Bai Bureh and the Sierra Leone Hut Tax War of 1898', in R. I. Rotberg and A. A. Mazrui (eds.), *Protest and Power in Black Africa*, London 1970, pp. 169-212.

¹⁰ For instance M'Baye Guèye and A. A. Boahen, 'African Initiatives and Resistance in West Africa, 1880-1914', in *UNESCO General History of Africa*, 7 vols., Paris 1981-1985, vol. 7; A. A. Boahen (ed.), *Africa under Colonial Domination, 1880-1935*, Paris 1985, pp. 114-48, deals with the conquest in two discrete phases, French and then British, just as this author did in his *West Africa under Colonial Rule*, London 1968.

conquest with differing aims and priorities in view. The special case of the French Military in the Western Sudan is well known, indeed almost notorious.¹¹ But parallels exist in Nigeria where the occupation of Northern Nigeria was primarily if not exclusively under military direction, while that of the two southern protectorates was under civil control. To what extent were differences in the subsequent administrative organization of the northern and southern protectorates the result? Did the differing modes of conquest have any influence on the determination of otherwise with which resistance was conducted? Did the nature of subjugation have a subsequent impact on the way in which the defeated responded to colonial rule? For instance, were people who had been bloodily and ruthlessly subjugated more likely or less likely to accept it? What, if any, are the connections between the mode of conquest and subsequent revolts against the colonial regime?

2. THE IMPACT OF MODES OF AFRICAN RESISTANCE ON EUROPEAN STRATEGIES

While it is conventional wisdom that African armies were easily defeated because, with the notable exceptions of Samori and Bai Bureh,¹² they by and large failed, like French generals in the Second World War, to alter their tactics to deal with a changed military situation, little attention has been paid to the flexibility or otherwise of the tactics of the invading generals. Was, in fact, the prolonged conquest of Samori as much due to a failure of French commanders to adapt their tactics as to Samori's skilful innovations? Certainly in the case of Bai Bureh the British were slow to adapt to his tactics and indeed throughout the conquest European armies wore uniforms quite unsuited to the climate so that it was not surprising that Colonel Bosworth should be reported in the campaign against Bai Bureh as having died of heat apoplexy.¹³ In the war against Bai Bureh there was in fact considerable dispute between Cardew, the Governor of Sierra Leone, who believed the lightly equipped Sierra Leone Frontier Police would be more effective in dealing with him, and the military who favoured the use of the more clumsily equipped West India Regiment.¹⁴ We know now that many of the campaigns against African armies were not the swift successes of the popular imperial histories, and that European commanders suffered their setbacks. How far were these due to European failures to respond to innovatory tactics on the part of Africans? So successful were Bai Bureh's guerilla tactics, for instance, that for the first two months of the war he dominated its course. Only when the British abandoned conventional tactics and adopted a policy of sending out flying columns to destroy every village that offered resistance did the tide of war begin to turn in their favour.¹⁵ Cardew was in fact very unhappy about the scorched earth policy of the military, but in other cases the civil administrators backed such policies on the grounds that they would more easily govern their erstwhile opponents. But more fundamental than that, as Wesseling has pointed out, European officers had little if no training on how to conduct colonial wars

¹¹ Kanya-Forstner, *Western Sudan*.

¹² See Y. Person, 'Guinea-Samori' and L. R. Denzer, 'Sierra Leone—Bai Bureh', in Crowder, *West African Resistance*, pp. 111–43 and 233–67.

¹³ PRO CO/267/437: Conf. Dispatch 22 Gov. Sierra Leone to Sec. of State, 31 Mar. 1898.

¹⁴ Denzer and Crowder, 'Bai Bureh', p. 195.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

and because they soon found that traditional methods could not deal effectively with guerilla warfare, the scorched earth policy was applied on a large scale.¹⁶ This is certainly borne out by the campaigns of European commanders in West Africa who, when they came up against the unfamiliar problems of fighting against decentralized societies in South Eastern Nigeria or Ivory Coast that effectively confronted them with a situation of guerilla warfare, often resorted as did the Americans in Vietnam to tactics of overkill and methods that were outside every conventional rule book on the conduct of warfare, punishing civilians, burning their houses, and flogging or executing defeated opponents. Thus, in dealing with the Tiv, Lugard wrote:

I cannot but express my sense of regret for the very great loss of life among these ignorant savages and the burning of scores of villages with their food. The Munshis (Tiv), however, are a most intractable people, and nothing except extremely severe chastisement of this sort will prevent them from lawless murders and looting of canoes, and induce them to allow the telegraph to be constructed through their country.¹⁷

The study of European response to African military tactics, in particular to changes in them, should not be difficult, since there is an abundance of evidence available in military and civil archives, newspaper reports, and the memoirs of commanders and officers involved in the campaigns.¹⁸ It would seem to be time to examine these afresh with a view to understanding how European officers perceived the enemy, assessed his military strength and potential, and in particular responded to changes in his tactics.

3. THE AFRICAN MILITARY RESPONSE

While the African military response to the European invasion has been paid considerable attention in recent years, it has rarely been examined with the professional eye of the military historian, notable exceptions being Joseph P. Smaldone's *Warfare in the Sokoto Caliphate*, Myron J. Echenberg's article on late nineteenth-century military technology in Upper Volta, and the work of Thierno Mouctar Bah on military architecture in the Western Sudan from the seventeenth century to the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁹ A whole range of questions needs to be asked in relation to other African armies, large and small, standing or volunteer, before we can really understand the military reasons for the comparatively easy defeat of some armies and the prolonged resistance of others. Starting with the leadership, as is perhaps more appropriate in military history than in any other field, how did the generals perceive

¹⁶ H. I. Wesseling, 'Colonial Wars and Armed Peace, 1870-1914: A Reconnaissance', *Itinerario*, 5/2 (1981), pp. 53-73: p. 56.

¹⁷ Quoted by O. Ikime, 'The British pacification' of the Tiv, 1900-1908', in *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 7 (1973), pp. 103-11: p. 104. See also T. C. Weiskel, *French Colonial Rule and the Baule Peoples: Resistance and Collaboration, 1889-1911*, Oxford 1980.

¹⁸ In the context of later 'rebellions' see for instance the detailed 'War Diary of Colour Sergeant Kerry', National Archives, Kaduna, SNP/10/331P/1915 which gives a very detailed account of British operations against

'rebels' in Bussa in 1915.

¹⁹ J. P. Smaldone, *Warfare in the Sokoto Caliphate: Historical and Sociological Perspectives*, Cambridge 1977; M. J. Echenberg, 'Late Nineteenth Century Military Technology in Upper Volta', in *Journal of African History*, 12 (1971), pp. 241-54; T. M. Bah, 'L'Architecture militaire traditionnelle et la poliorcétique dans le Soudan occidental du xviii^e à la fin du xix^e siècle', Ph.D. thesis Paris, Sorbonne, 1971. See the extract entitled 'Samba Ndiaye, Ingénieur des armes Toucouleur d'El Hadj Omar', in *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 8 (1977), pp. 161-69.

their European foe, assess his military potential, and make decisions as to how to respond to this new situation especially when the invading Europeans constituted only one among several military threats? Unfortunately we do not have the memoirs of the African generals as we do those of not a few of their European counterparts, but the answers to the questions posed above can in part be deduced from the course and outcome of the battle, and in part from the records themselves. A real challenge confronts the oral historian to try and supplement the above sources with traditions that will help him enter the mind of the African military commander and discover why he made the decisions he did. Recently R. F. Morton has shown that by a judicious combination of the records and oral tradition one can make a sophisticated assessment not only of how an African ruler, in this case Linchwe I of the Rakgatla-ba-Kgafela in what is now Botswana, made his military decisions and on what grounds, but also of what he hoped to obtain from his participation in the South African war of 1899–1902.²⁰ Since many of the wars against the European invaders in West Africa were taking place only a little time before this, and in some cases afterwards, it should be possible to make a similar study of West African military leaders. This might help us understand why some stuck to conventional tactics which ended in swift defeat, while others resorted to guerilla tactics which were at least successful in prolonging the conflict.

We know relatively little about how rulers or their generals formed and supplied their armies, though here again there are notable exceptions in the case of Samori,²¹ Sokoto²² and Bai Bureh.²³ How were soldiers in particular mobilized, what was the voluntary as contrasted with the compulsory element in recruitment, a factor which might possibly help us understand patterns of resistance to recruitment for the two world wars under the colonial regime?²⁴ How were the soldiers equipped, by themselves or by the state? If the state assumed responsibility, how did it gear its production or procurement of supplies in order to meet the special challenge of an army which was technologically far superior in its equipment? We have a great deal of information about Samori's response in this respect but precious little about the armies of other states. How quickly did African soldiers learn how to use technically more advanced weapons either secured through trade or captured in war?²⁵ Generally what training were they given?

Once mobilized for war against this new kind of enemy—if indeed that was how he was perceived—how were soldiers motivated by their commanders especially when they were privy to the defeat of neighbouring armies with similar resources? In the case of Bai Bureh the reason for which his troops remained 'loyal to him to the very last'

²⁰ R. F. Morton, 'Linchwe I and the Kgatla Campaign in the South African War, 1899–1902', in *Journal of African History*, 26 (1985), pp. 169–91.

²¹ See M. Legassick's pioneering article 'Firearms, Horses and Samorian Army Organization, 1870–1898', in *Journal of African History*, 7 (1966), pp. 95–115.

²² Smaldone, *Warfare in the Sokoto Caliphate*.

²³ Denzer, 'Sierra Leone—Bai Bureh', pp. 244–50. See also L. R. Denzer, 'A Diary of the Bai Bureh War' (two parts), in *Sierra Leone Studies*, NS 23 (1968), pp. 39–64, and 24 (1969), pp. 52–68.

²⁴ When volunteers were called on for the Second

World War in Kwengeng in what is now Botswana, the Acting District Commissioner reported that 'the headmen dislike the idea of calling for volunteers, even the young men have grumbled about it to me. They say that the Chief should call the men who are to go and that Voluntary Service is absolutely unknown to the Bakwena.' B[otswana] N[atational] A[rchives] S.136/1:Ag. D. C. Molepole to Government Sec., Mafeking, 28 Apr. 1941.

²⁵ Again we have detailed information on these questions for Samori and quite a lot for Bai Bureh, but not much for other polities.

was, according to C. Braithwaite Wallis, a Frontier Police officer, their deep love for their chief.²⁶ Were there greater difficulties in mobilizing support in states such as Sokoto and the Tokolor Empire, which themselves had been established by the military conquest of the majority by an ethnically distinct minority, than in states where the rulers were ethnically homogenous with those they ruled? For instance Baba of Karo told Mary Smith that 'we have wanted [the Europeans] to come, it was the Fulani who did not like it'.²⁷ In major states, how did the leaders obtain the support of other social strata, without which it would have been impossible to contemplate resistance? As Allen and Barbara Isaacman have pointed out historians of Southern and Central Africa 'have failed to recognize that the decision to fight, to remain neutral or to collaborate did not rest exclusively with the aristocracy; splits occurred not only within the ruling factions but between different social strata'.²⁸ The same can be said of historians of West African resistance, though Ikime has drawn attention to this in the case of Southern Nigeria in his conclusion to the *Fall of Nigeria*.

A question of particular interest relates to the problems of mobilization of men in societies like those of the Tiv and Igbo, where their decentralized character did not provide for regular military organization of any kind.²⁹

Warfare is of course not just a matter for soldiers: civilians are involved not only in provisioning of armies but as potential auxiliaries if the enemy succeeds in gaining footholds in the national territory. How then were foodstuffs and other supplies needed for war obtained from the civilian population? Did they yield up foodstuff's voluntarily, were they paid for, or were they merely requisitioned? And in the case of the latter, how far did this create resentment among civilians against their rulers and predispose them to an acceptance of colonial rule? Again, depending on the answer there may be insights for the historian studying the reaction of African societies to requisitioning or compulsory cultivation of food during the two World Wars.³⁰ In the case of successful invasion by the European enemy, what was the reaction of the civilian population to occupation by the invading power, did civilians take up arms against him, adopt tactics of passive resistance, or welcome him as a relief from pressure from an oppressive ruling class as Lugard anticipated they would in the Sokoto Caliphate and as Consul Phillips did in Benin?³¹

4. MILITARY INTELLIGENCE

African societies were much less isolated from each other at the end of the nineteenth century than the colonial historiography used to lead us to believe. Through an

²⁶ C. Braithwaite Wallis, *The Advance of our West African Empire*, London 1903, pp. 51-2.

²⁷ M. Smith, *Baba of Karo: A Woman of the Moslem Hausa*, London 1964, p. 67.

²⁸ A. Isaacman and B. Isaacman, 'Resistance and Collaboration in Southern and Central Africa, c.1850-1920', in *International Journal of African History Studies*, 10 (1977), pp. 31-62: p. 33. See also pp. 39 and 41.

²⁹ Here the documents in Asiegbu, *Nigeria and its British Invaders*, relating to the Igbo are useful.

³⁰ In the Bechuanaland Protectorate for instance it was decided, with the backing of the chiefs, to revive the pre-colonial custom of the Tswana *merafe* during times of warfare to cultivate communal areas known as 'War Lands'. By 1945 3,274 acres had been developed for this purpose: Principal Agricultural Officer to African Advisory Council at its meeting of 11-20 Aug. 1947.

³¹ P. A. Igbafe, 'The Fall of Benin: A Re-Assessment', in *Journal of African History*, 10 (1970), pp. 385-400: p. 395.

elaborate network of trade routes that reached out into the most isolated areas of West Africa, societies large and small were linked with each other. In the Western and Central Sudan common belief in Islam gave states from the river Senegal to the Mandara mountains a community of interest and knowledge about each other reinforced by the pilgrimage.³² It is well known that the soldiers of the Burba Jollof and Ahmadou of the Tokolor fought alongside those of the Sokoto Caliphate against the British. News of the fall of Ijebu-Ode spread quickly to other Yoruba states. Yet, with the exception of Robert Smith's *Warfare and Diplomacy in West Africa*,³³ little attention has been paid to the role of military and diplomatic intelligence in West Africa let alone during the period of the conquest. How, for instance, did states react to the fall of their neighbours, close or distant, to European guns? How was their intelligence obtained and how was it evaluated in terms of the known military resources of the fallen states as compared with their own?

In evaluating this intelligence, who made the decisions on the basis of it, the political head of the state or the army commander, where these were not one and the same person? How were chances of victory or defeat by the invader estimated? How far did African states or armies have formal intelligence services? We know that Samori had a sophisticated intelligence network, but relatively little is known about the functioning of this vital defensive arm of the state in other African polities, a notable exception again being Bai Bureh, who 'operated an extremely reliable spy system'.³⁴

5. WAR AND DIPLOMACY

The conventional picture of the great treaty-making expeditions made by Europeans before and immediately in the wake of the Berlin Conference is that of innocent, gullible, or unsuspecting rulers agreeing to treaties the full import of which they did not understand. While it is true that some rulers did indeed sign treaties without understanding them, or were duped outrightly by the European treaty-makers who gave them a deliberately false impression of the burden of the contents of the unfamiliar pieces of paper, many clearly did comprehend their import.³⁵ What we need to ask is how far in signing treaties African rulers used them to stave off what they knew from their intelligence services would be eventual invasion, and in particular how far they used this device to give them time to prepare for that invasion. Winston McGowan has made a convincing case that the Almamies of the Futa Jallon used treaties, in particular rejection of European versions or interpretation of them, as a means of resistance.³⁶

³² U. al Nagar, *The Pilgrimage Tradition in West Africa*, Khartoum 1972.

³³ R. S. Smith, *Warfare and Diplomacy in Pre-colonial West Africa*, London 1976.

³⁴ Denzer, 'Bai Bureh', p. 249.

³⁵ Perhaps the first historian firmly to challenge this myth was J. D. Hargreaves in his article 'Towards a History of the Partition of Africa', in *Journal of African History*, 1 (1960), pp. 97-109; p. 108, where he wrote that more often rulers 'pursued clear purposes of their own—the maintenance of independence, the retention of

power within their dominion, and the elimination of commercial rivals'. E. A. Ayandele, by contrast, still sticks to the view that those 'who thumb-marked the "treaties" never understood their content and implications' in the case of the Yoruba, in his 'Britain and Yorubaland in the Nineteenth Century', in *Nigerian Historical Studies*, London 1979, p. 37.

³⁶ W. McGowan, 'Fula Resistance to French Expansion into Futa Jallon, 1889-1896', in *Journal of African History*, 22 (1981), pp. 245-61; p. 246. See also B. O. Oloruntimehin, 'Franco-Samori Relations

How far in the face of common danger did African leaders consider co-operating with each other? Why were there so few examples of the forces of one African state going to the assistance of another? Was this the result of chauvinism, ethnocentricity, or traditional rivalry, which is the usual explanation, or the result of political situations that made it impossible for states to release their armies? For instance just as the Caliph of Sokoto could not send his forces to help his constituent emirates fight the British since he had enough military problems on his own doorstep to keep his army occupied, so he could not have sent aid to his Tokolor cousin, Ahmadou, in his fight against the French in the 1890s for his Caliphate had not only its internal and external enemies of a century's standing, but the new threat from Rabih ibn Fadlallah in the east. We do know that African states were able to form coalitions in times of danger as with the alliance between Borgu and Oyo against the Fulani of Ilorin in c.1835, while McGowan has shown recently that the Almamies of the Futa Jallon gave support to other resistance by other African states.³⁷ In the 1898 Hut Tax War Bai Bureh was able to form an alliance of Temne chiefdoms in his struggle with the British.³⁸

Again more work needs to be done on the way African rulers used the European invaders to further their own ends as in the case of Sikasso allying with the French against Samori whom they considered the more immediate danger, or in Southern Africa of Khama III of the Bangwato who joined with Rhodes to defeat his own long-standing enemy, Lobengula of the Ndebele. In this connection how far were the Europeans conceived of as a categorically different enemy, or just as one among several. In both the Niger Delta and Yorubaland the British were just one of many factors that states had to take into account in formulating their foreign policy, and often they were perceived at least in the short run as the lesser danger.³⁹ Here the reactions of Sokoto would be instructive. How far, again, were African leaders, like the Almamies of the Futa Jallon, able to exploit rivalries between the invaders?⁴⁰

Finally, in their perceptions of the European invasion, to what extent did African leaders calculate that defeat was inevitable and decide therefore not to fight and make the best of an impossible situation by negotiating the most favourable terms they could get? This was the case with the famous treaty-making journey through the Yoruba states by Governor Carter in the wake of the fall of Ijebu. In Southern Africa again the example of Khama III is instructive: faced by the prospect of occupation by the Boers or Rhodes' British South Africa Company, he sought out what he considered a potentially less oppressive alternative in the shape of a British Protectorate.

7. THE SOLDIERY

Most studies of African resistance to the European invasion concentrate on the role of rulers and army commanders, and pay relatively little, if any, attention to that of their officers and soldiers. What was the chain of command? How were plans of action

1889: Diplomacy as War', in *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 6 (1971), pp. 67-92.

³⁷ McGowan, 'Fula Resistance', p. 247.

³⁸ Denzer, 'Bai Bureh', pp. 246-7.

³⁹ Ikime, *Fall of Nigeria*, pp. 210-11 and 'Colonial Conquest and Resistance in Southern Nigeria', in *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 6 (1972), pp. 251-70.

⁴⁰ McGowan, 'Fula Resistance', p. 248.

determined? In consultation with officers and with specialist advice? How were the ordinary footsoldiers and horsemen organized,⁴¹ disciplined, and in particular motivated against an enemy which, in many cases for the first time, had the superiority in weapons and tactics? How did the officer corps and the rank and file respond in the course of the battle? Again much of this information can be distilled from the accounts of battle made by the European invaders and from oral tradition.

Once defeated, what happened to the soldiery? Where they were volunteers and conscripts, did they just return to their farms? And what alternative occupation did those who formed part of a standing army seek out? Were those who then joined the invading forces more likely to be drawn from among the ranks of professionals than volunteers or conscripts?

Again, once enlisted in the European armies, what was their role in the defeat of other African armies? It is a commonplace that the European occupation of Africa would not have been possible without African soldiers and even NCOs, and in rare cases officers, but that is as far as it goes. While there have been studies of the role of African soldiers in the Colonial armies during the First and Second World Wars, there has been almost no attention paid to their function in the armies of conquest, with the exception of Charles J. Balesi, who has shown how much careful study of the published memoirs of French army officers can reveal about both the Africa soldiers they commanded and those against whom they fought.⁴² How were they trained; how did they respond to European military methods and discipline; what situations triggered off mutinies; were they as capable as European soldiers in handling European weaponry; what was the European perception of their capabilities; what special functions were they used for that Europeans could not fulfil, in particular as scouts, spies, and so on? How did NCOs and officers like General Dodds perform and how was this performance evaluated by the colonial authorities? Why were the French willing to commission Africans, albeit few in number, and the British not?

Finally, and probably most important of all, how did these soldiers perceive themselves: as mercenaries, collaborators, or turncoats, or did they feel that they had become traitors in joining the European armies sometimes even against people of their own ethnic group? Charles J. Balesi has shown that in Senegal and Sudan, at least, they were despised by their fellow Africans;⁴³ while Donal Cruise O'Brien describes Demba War Sall, one of Lat Dior's principal lieutenants who fell out with him over his conversion to Islam, as 'Judas' for joining the French and guiding the column which finally defeated and killed his king. But is this not to use European categories in what O'Brien shows in his elegant essay on Lat Dior to be an immensely complex and contradictory situation?⁴⁴ Indeed the whole question of whether we can justifiably pin pejorative labels like 'collaborator' on soldiers and civilians who co-operated with or assisted the European invaders needs to be discussed in greater depth. Very often their motives were far removed from those we associate with the word collaborator as it came to be used in the Second World War and certainly rarely involved a conscious attempt

⁴¹ See Smaldone, *Warfare in the Sokoto Caliphate*, and R. Law, *The Horse in West African History*, Oxford 1980. Also J. F. A. Ajayi and R. S. Smith, *Yoruba Warfare in the 19th Century*, Cambridge and Ibadan 1964.

⁴² C. J. Balesi, 'From Adversary to Comrade-in-Arms: West Africans and the French Military,

1885-1919'. University of Illinois, Ph.D. Thesis, 1976.

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 37-8.

⁴⁴ D. Cruise O'Brien, *Saints and Politicians: Essays on the Organisation of a Senegalese Peasant Society*, Cambridge 1975, p. 33.

to alienate their independence or that of their fellow men. 'Collaboration' is more often inspired by short term self-interest, and carried out in ignorance of the long-term consequences.

8. THE CIVILIANS

Even more passive than the role of the ordinary soldier in the historiography of the conquest is that of the civilian population despite the fact that in many cases they suffered great devastation and upheaval as a result of it. What was the civilian reaction to the engagement of the states of which they formed part against the invaders? Did they take a more active role if they came from ethnically homogeneous groups, whether centralized or decentralized, than if they lived in states which were dominated by an immigrant ruling group? How far was their reaction linked to the character of their state, ethnically homogeneous or otherwise; was there, for instance, a correlation between support for resistance and the exploitative character of the state? Did they use the opportunity of the preoccupation of their rulers to regain their independence when they themselves were subject peoples?⁴⁵

What was the role of the civilian population in the pursuit of war? In the case of the Yoruba whole families could be involved in a siege, the women and children being engaged in farming to produce the foodstuffs for their menfolk in arms.⁴⁶ Could, in fact, agriculturally based communities sustain long-term resistance?

Where peasants were initially indifferent to conquest, as was often the case in Europe before war became the concern of the nation-state as a whole rather than of the ruling élites, did their attitudes change once the true nature of the new colonial regime made itself apparent to them? The case of Ohori-Ije suggests that this may often have been the case. For this small state, in what is now Benin, the French had destroyed its arch-enemy Dahomey, which became a matter for public jubilation. Yet as the nature of French rule became apparent, the Ohori became involved in a number of protests against the new dispensation culminating in the 1914-15 revolt.⁴⁷ Is there any pattern to be found in the post-conquest resistance and (a) the initial attitudes of the civilian population to the war against the invader and (b) subsequent risings, in particular those of the First World War in French West Africa? Is there a continuity or discontinuity between those who resisted the initial invasion and those who rose in revolt against the colonial regime once it was established?

What were the motives behind those of the civilian population who actively collaborated with the invaders in their plans for conquest? Some work has been done on the reasons why the educated élites and their press gave support to the occupation of the hinterland of the coastal colonies in which they lived by their colonial masters rulers. The obvious explanations are their interests in expanding their own opportunities for trade and the spreading of Christianity. But how did they perceive their support for the

⁴⁵ Allen and Barbara Isaacman point out that a number of subject peoples in Malawi used the occasion of the scramble to attempt to overthrow the rule of their overlords, namely the Inhambane Tonga rose against the Gaza Ngoni, while the Lakeside Tonga and Tumbuka challenged Mbwela Ngoni rule. 'Resistance and

Collaboration', p. 38.

⁴⁶ Ajayi and Smith, *Yoruba Warfare*, pp. 28, 86-7; see also Appendix I, 'Captain Jones's Report', pp. 136-7.

⁴⁷ A. I. Asiwaju, 'Anti-French Resistance Movements in Ohori-Ije (Dahomey), 1895-1960', in *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 8 (1974), pp. 255-69.

white man's war against their African 'brothers'?⁴⁸ Did they have problems in reconciling such support with their conception of themselves as Africans? Again what was the role of the civilian employees of the invading armies, the clerks, the cooks, and the carriers, and how were they recruited and what functions did they fulfil?

More work has to be done on those who did not actively collaborate with the European invaders but gladly accepted their presence. British intervention in Yorubaland, which had been at war for as long as most people could remember, was widely welcomed for the peace it brought.⁴⁹ Of the British invasion of Ijebu-Ode, the contemporary Yoruba historian Samuel Johnson, wrote: 'To the vast majority of the common people it was like the opening of a prison door.'⁵⁰ Although Lat Dior, Damel of Kayor, had bitterly opposed the construction of the Dakar-St Louis railway by the French, and was killed in battle for his pains, crowds of enthusiastic farmers applauded the arrival of the first train at each new station along the railway line.⁵¹ White merchants in Zinder welcomed the arrival of the French treaty-making expedition led by Captain Cazémajou, though the Sultan, who was more aware of its implications for his independence, had him killed.⁵²

9. THE SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE EUROPEAN INVASION

There had certainly never before been wars in West Africa conducted on the scale and with, at least on the side of the invaders, such destructive resources as those of the late nineteenth century when Africans pitted themselves against European armies. In social terms they must have been as traumatic, if not more so, as any preceding them. Yet little work has been done to establish how many civilians were killed or wounded in the war, what the extent of the physical destruction caused by the invading armies such as the notorious Voulet-Chanoine expedition was,⁵³ or in the case of Lat Dior and Samori as a result of their own defensive scorched earth policies. A major difficulty in assessing the cost in lives to the resisting states is the fact that the European invaders rarely counted their opponents' casualties, civilian or military.⁵⁴ Furthermore, did these wars start epidemics, or facilitate the spread of disease both human and animal?

We have little evidence as to the extent of displacement of peoples consequent of the invasion or how permanent this was. What was the psychological impact of the war on different populations? We know that in the case of the fall of the Sokoto Caliphate thousands of peasants were prepared to uproot themselves and follow their defeated Caliph into exile (or rather as they would have conceived it on *hijra*) rather than live

⁴⁸ F. I. A. Omu, *Press and Politics in Nigeria 1880-1937*, London 1978, has an interesting discussion of African press support for British intervention in Ijebu-Ode and its subsequent disillusion with the outcome, pp. 121 and 133.

⁴⁹ J. A. Atanda, *The New Ovo Empire*, London 1973, p. 47.

⁵⁰ S. Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas*, Lagos 1937, p. 623.

⁵¹ Cruise O'Brien, *Saints and Politicians*, p. 35.

⁵² F. Fugelstad, *A History of Niger 1850-1960*, Cambridge 1983, p. 55.

⁵³ Fugelstad's generally impressive *History of Niger* is disappointing in its account of the Voulet-Chanoine expedition in that it gives only scant attention to these types of question, viz: 'The resistance against the Voulet-Chanoine expedition probably took a heavy toll (perhaps five thousand or more casualties). Vast regions, the river valley in particular, had been thoroughly devastated. After the terrible sack of Birnin Konni, which must have created a profound impression throughout Hausaland, it would take a great deal of courage to try and resist the French', p. 61.

⁵⁴ Wesseling, 'Colonial Wars', p. 59.

under the rule of the infidel. Was this a unique experience relevant only to Muslim societies and was their a qualitative difference not only in their response to the invasion but also in their reaction to defeat, or were these responses essentially the same whether Muslim or not? As Adamu Fika has pointed out, to appreciate the attitude of Aliyu Babba, emir of Kano, and the Kano ruling group, a knowledge of their Islamic obligations is essential. Knowing he had nothing to match the British 75 mm. and Maxim guns, Aliyu consulted with the Caliph of Sokoto as to whether the faithful should go on *hijra* to avoid European rule. He argues that the 'frantic fortification' of Kano towns during 1902 was 'a stop-gap measure pending a final decision' from Sokoto.⁵⁵

10. THE COST OF WAR

A major question that remains largely unanswered is how much did these wars cost?⁵⁶ It is probably impossible to do more than estimate the financial burden for the African states involved. But as far as the European campaigns are concerned, there should be little difficulty in assessing their costs, as to how much was borne by the Imperial Treasury or how far colonial peoples paid for their own conquest. The cost of the Ashanti expedition to the British was estimated at £815,000.⁵⁷ It has been further suggested that the colonial wars had their own intrinsic value for European powers anxious to try out new weapons and tactics.⁵⁸ If this in fact was the case, it is not an element of the cost of these wars that can be conventionally priced.

CONCLUSION

In this essay we have posed many questions with regard to the broad spectrum of conquest and resistance in West Africa. Some of these questions have not been asked before, some may be unanswerable or considered by some as not worth the asking. Not a few questions, as indicated in the footnotes, have been answered in part by micro-studies of the resistance of one particular state. Really to understand the nature of African resistance we need many more comparative studies but these cannot be effective without further research on individual cases. There was a time when the impacts of the First and Second World Wars on Africa were thought to be the major lacunae in our understanding of the colonial experience. This is now no longer the case. I would argue that despite the not inconsiderable attention paid to resistance to the European occupation of West Africa, it has too often been seen in isolation from the

⁵⁵ A. Fika, *The Kano Civil War and British Over-rule 1882-1940*, Ibadan 1978, p. 90.

⁵⁶ This question was raised by Colin Newbury during the discussion of the paper at the symposium in Berlin. I am grateful to him for this and for drawing my attention to the literature (albeit scant) that exists on this subject.

⁵⁷ C. W. Newbury, *British Policy towards West Africa: Select Documents, 1786-1874*, Oxford 1965, p. 644. For the background to small wars in West Africa undertaken by

the British see P. M. Mbacyi, *British Military and Naval Forces in West African History, 1807-1874*, New York and Lagos 1978. Mbacyi goes into great detail about the number of men and the equipment involved in these wars, but unfortunately has very little information on the expenses involved.

⁵⁸ This question was raised at the symposium by Dr Stig Förster.

ensuing colonial period as though defeat meant the end of a chapter of African history. Rather an understanding of the differing nature of that defeat from state to state and from people to people, its consequent impact on the structures of the defeated peoples, the psychology of colonial domination that decisive defeat could inflict on them, the perception of the colonial rulers of subjects who resisted or accepted the invaders without a fight, would enrich our comprehension of the ensuing colonial period. As it is, even Elizabeth Isichei's provocative, if sometimes perversely unconventional, new *History of Nigeria*,⁵⁹ gives a rather pedestrian account of the occupation and resistance to it, while the Historical Society of Nigeria's *Groundwork of Nigerian History*⁶⁰ does not even devote a chapter to them.

There are many questions that still need to be asked about the European invasion that the Berlin Conference did so much to hasten, and its centenary is as appropriate an occasion as any to urge scholars to start finding the answers to them.

⁵⁹ E. Isichei, *A History of Nigeria*, London 1983, ch. 15, 'A Colonial Interlude: Foreign Encroachment', pp. 362-77.

⁶⁰ O. Ikime (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Ibadan 1980.

Partition in Practice: African Politics and European Rivalry in Bufumbira

ELIZABETH HOPKINS

The principle of effective occupation, so central to the claim of imperial legitimacy on coasts following the Berlin Conference, would have little bearing on the partition of Africa inland. To define and affirm such a principle was one thing, to translate it into African politics was quite another. European Powers advancing into the interior became involved in indigenous processes of colonization and empire-building which undermined any reliance upon a consistent or simple set of international rules for annexation or protection. If this partition carried at all times a number of geographic impediments, these would be aggravated in the Kivu-Mfumbiro area which remained the subject of dispute between Britain, Germany, and the Congo state up to 1910.

The extravagant definition of the Congo Basin at the Conference and the territorial concessions which the Association had been granted by its avowed competitors, Portugal and France, regarding its uncontested jurisdiction over opposing banks of the Congo River, prompted Leopold in 1885 to claim all unexplored territory west of the thirtieth meridian. Germany, although unaware of the nature of the hinterland defined by her pre-emptive claim to the Zanzibari mainland in December of 1884, approved the king's pretention in the Congolese Declaration of Neutrality in 1885.¹

Although the region which lay between Lake Tanganyika and Lake Edward remained unexplored, the interior co-ordinates of Great Britain's sphere of interest in East Africa were established in 1890 and 1894. For Great Britain, the ascendant concerns in her negotiations with Germany were her rights to 'Mount Mfumbiro' and access to Lake Kivu, the one lake of the western Rift chain which lay beyond her jurisdiction. The 1890 Agreement with Germany extended the Anglo-German frontier west of Lake Victoria to the Congo Free State. The provisional dividing line was the first degree parallel but the Agreement secured her claim to Mount Mfumbiro should it be found to lie south of this line.

In May of 1894, Britain 'rashly' affirmed the 1885 geometric convention with the Congo Free State and acknowledged her western boundary as the thirtieth meridian.² The following month, the expedition of Count von Götzen determined the position of Lake Kivu. Both this strategic lake, which initiates the great chain of lakes and rivers south to the Zambezi, and the volcanic chain to its north lay well to the west of the thirtieth meridian.

¹ R. Slade, *King Leopold's Congo*, London, 1961, p. 41.

² The Declaration had defined the common frontier between the Congo Free State and German East Africa as the thirtieth degree parallel to 1° 20'± of south latitude, then as a straight line to the northern extremity of Lake

Tanganyika. W. R. Louis, *Ruanda-Urundi*, Oxford 1963, p. 6. At that time, the region claimed by the Belgians remained unexplored. The discovery in 1894 of Lake Kivu and the Mfumbiro range by Count von Götzen placed Bufumbira well within Belgian territory.

In 1896, the western frontiers of German East Africa became an issue as Belgian forces occupied both shores of Lake Kivu and established a post on the northern end of Lake Tanganyika. To contain any further extension of Belgian activity to the east, the Germans established a station at Usumbura, on the north-eastern shore of Lake Tanganyika. The Belgian Declaration of Neutrality, which Germany had ratified in 1885, now proved a serious impediment to German activity to the north for it defined their common boundary as a geophysical line to be drawn from the intersection of the 30th meridian by 1° 20' south latitude to the northernmost point of Lake Tanganyika.³ To honour it would be to deny access to Lake Kivu.

German claims to the territory east of Lake Kivu would rest on two demonstrations of their active engagement in the occupation of the region they wished to protect. Early in 1897 three German officers, accompanied by an armed escort of three hundred, marched north from Usumbura to the court of the celebrated kingdom of Rwanda. There, an individual who was presented as Musinga, the Rwanda ruler, was induced to accept the German flag and commerce in return for German protection against Belgian 'incursions'.⁴ With formal relations thus secured, no effort was made to occupy Rwanda until the establishment of a Residence at Kigali in 1907.

Although these protectorate claims over the kingdom of Rwanda would provide the primary basis for Germany's challenge to the 1885 Declaration, she also established a post on the southern end of Lake Kivu in 1898. A second, smaller post was established at Kisenyi, at the northern end, in 1902 but not permanently occupied until 1907.⁵ The position of these posts and the failure of the Germans to establish a station near the Rwanda court betrayed the priority of international strategies over local administrative considerations. The very size of the posts⁶ ensured that they could serve as little more than intelligence outposts to monitor the movements of Congolese troops and to provide a symbolic deterrent to Belgian expansion east of the lake.

The situation to the north of Lake Kivu, although technically well within Belgian territory, would remain the object of intense international controversy throughout the first decade of the twentieth century as Germany, Leopold and then Belgium, and Great Britain sought to control the strategic western Rift Valley which provided a natural water route from Lake Tanganyika to the Nile. At the geographic centre of this conflict was the Mfumbiro range for it spanned a region to which all three powers, whether by treaty or bilateral agreement, had legitimate claim.

The hydrographic priorities which informed European expansion throughout Africa would dominate the early political history of this region. Certainly in no other area of Africa would the prize be so complex, for the mountain chains which spanned the plains south of Lake Edward and formed the eastern spine along Lake Kivu constituted the divide between the upper tributaries of the Nile, the Congo Basin, and the drainage system into Lake Tanganyika.

To each European Power, committed to securing as comprehensive a claim as possible within the region, the investment in these early years would be in military displays, not, as the terms of the Berlin Conference had dictated for the coasts, in the

³ J. M. Coote, 'The Kivu Mission 1909-10', in *Uganda Journal*, 20 (1956), pp. 105-12, p. 111.

⁴ Louis, *Ruanda-Urundi*, pp. 5-6.

⁵ Alison Des Forges, *Defeat is the Only Bad News*:

Rwanda Under Musiinga, 1896-1931, Ph.D Thesis, New Haven 1972, pp. 22-3.

⁶ Louis, *Ruanda-Urundi*, p. 43.

establishment of sufficient authority to secure 'the maintenance of peace, the administration of justice, and respect for rights acquired'.⁷

The constraints were in part intrinsic to the scale of operations and their military character. The size of the garrisons and the need of the competing powers to monitor the movements of other patrols in the area left them little opportunity to establish systematic local contacts beyond those collaborator networks necessary to secure their commissariat. German and British officials, moreover, were under explicit orders 'not to intervene in local political affairs'.⁸ In such circumstances, the European perception of the local political arena and of the alignments and priorities of the African societies within the contested zone was marked by an expediency and simplicity of purpose. It was advantageous not to know, to label, to stereotype, for it eliminated the need for a more responsible engagement on the local level.

The populations which found themselves abruptly transferred to British jurisdiction in 1910 had had little contact with their new European overlords. They had, however, been exposed for some fifteen years to the imperial expectations and assumptions of both Belgians and Germans. In Bufumbira, the European presence had been both tangible and sustained. It would not, however, until 1909, be a British experience.

The region to the north-east of Lake Kivu had endured a proto-colonial period of exceptional complexity and ambiguity. Prior to 1910, when the international boundaries marking the common frontier of the Belgian Congo, the Uganda Protectorate, and German East Africa were finally resolved, the geometric conventions negotiated between 1885 and 1909 unquestionably provided the major constraint for the deployment of local imperial forces. Great Britain, although refusing to relinquish her treaty titles to Mount Mfumbiro, made no effort to extend her operations west of the thirtieth meridian. Germany, in turn, although committed to a protectorate relationship with the kingdom of Rwanda, deferred to the territorial constraints of the 1885 Declaration of Neutrality and remained south of Bufumbira, a region which she could legitimately claim as a province of Rwanda.

Although the Congo Free State was unchallenged north of the Mfumbiro range, the very presence of several competing European powers within a common ecological zone drew its populations into a wider political field. The European became both a catalyst for further dislocations and a source of protection or local influence. This complex web of alliance and evasion, so characteristic of the region during the pre-contact period, would continue to be explored—and tested—during the initial period of occupation as the attributes and priorities of each colonial power came to be understood.

LOCAL PRIORITIES

Although the kingdom of Rwanda lay well to the south-east of the contested region, European expectations of Rwanda politics and Rwandan capacities dominated the occupation of Bufumbira. Each imperial power, whether Belgian, German, or eventually British, chose to view these northern plains as fully incorporated provinces

⁷ Although they were established as military posts, the Ischangi station was manned by a lieutenant and twenty-one askari, that at Kisenyi by a non-commissioned officer

and four askari. *Ibid.* p. 121.

⁸ Crowe, *Berlin Conference*, p. 187.

of the Rwanda kingdom. The eastern slopes of the Bufumbira range give way to a narrow plain that provides, aside from a mountain pass to its west, the sole corridor south from Lake Edward to Lake Kivu. An area of independent clans, its potential as a grazing area had attracted the Rwanda court since the late sixteenth century.

Secured as a border area of Rwanda in the early nineteenth century, control by the court remained nominal.⁹ With the establishment of royal residences in the region in the 1860s, Bufumbira became an important entrepôt for King Rwabugiri's expeditions into rich pastoral zones to the north. A regional chief, a Mututsi client named Buuki, was also installed at this time.

The chronology of Rwandan intervention reveals two distinct phases in which the bitter, confrontational tenure of Buuki sharply contrasts with the moderate, even conciliatory role of his successor, Beerabose. Rwandan policy throughout both periods was one of assimilation in which it was envisaged that indigenous clan leaders would be drawn into the tributary structure of the court. For those who were not engaged directly in the patronage structure, exactions of tribute and labour were balanced by the assurance of protection, or at least immunity from Rwanda reprisals.

Despite the scale of these royal operations, efforts on the part of Buuki to regularize the tributary networks in Bufumbira were resisted. They were resisted, moreover, in a well-defined pattern of indigenous clan alliances. Most notable were the Abatongo whose challenges were 'fierce and prolonged'.¹⁰ By the 1880's the force of the Abatongo resistance had been broken, first by decisive battle, then by famine.¹¹

Rwandan strategies in Bufumbira were varied. All revealed an alertness both to the disproportionately small number of Batutsi in the region and to the disinclination of local clans to forfeit their autonomy. Royal clients were not used on the local level; rather, Rwabugiri found it 'politically expedient' to acknowledge the jurisdiction of the clan leaders and to elevate them to sub-chieftaincies.¹²

The expeditions of the period also provided the occasion for local groups or individuals to ally themselves to court officials in opportunistic bonds of personal and political gain. Collaboration was secured by inducements,¹³ notably through gifts of cattle or through the distribution of the spoils of raiding. Such options for participation ironically intensified the relevance of clan identity as localized clan segments found themselves divided in resisting or co-operating with the agents of Rwanda occupation.

The initial period of occupation under Buuki is remembered as one of oppression and unrest. Mateke notes, 'people who had cattle were always in constant fear'.¹⁴ His removal marked an important shift in the operational strategies of the Rwanda court in dealing with this proud and intractable population. In his place, Rwabugiri installed a daughter, Beerabose, with Muvunandinda, a trusted client, serving as her assistant and adviser. Rwabugiri's choice of representatives could not have been more astute. It is said of Muvunandinda that 'he came as a saviour'.¹⁵ His liberal policies quickly earned him a position of unprecedented popularity among the Bafumbira, so much so

⁹ Entebbe Secretariat, 1047, Political Officer to Chief Secretary, 12 Aug. 1910. Des Forges, *Mustinga*, p. 125.

¹⁰ Benoni Turyahikayo-Rugyema, *The History of the Bakiga in Southwestern Uganda and Northern Rwanda Ca. 1500-1930*, Ph.D. Thesis, Ann Arbor 1974, p. 162.

P. Ngologozo, *Kigezi and its People*, Kampala 1969, p. 21.

¹¹ Turyahikayo-Rugyema, *History of the Bakiga*, p. 163.

¹² Ibid.; Philemon Mateke, 'The Struggle for Dominance in Bufumbira, 1830-1920', in *Uganda Journal*, 34 (1970), pp. 35-49, p. 36.

¹³ Mateke, *ibid.*

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 37.

that when he was recalled by Musinga, Rwabugiri's successor, 'most Bahuta wanted him to stay on'.¹⁶

Despite the bitterness and anxiety which attended the earlier tenure of Buuki, Beerabose and Muvunandinda through their consistent recourse to 'inducement and diplomacy'¹⁷ made wide gains to redress the disaffection of the Bafumbira. In addition to avoiding provocative acts such as the arbitrary seizure of cattle, they made more systematic attempts to acknowledge unaffiliated clan leaders. Although the claims of the Rwanda court did violence to local clan autonomy, the careful and just fashion in which resident chiefs implemented its requirements earned them the respect and confidence of the Bafumbira.

As Rwabugiri's confidence in the stability and co-operativeness of the region increased, Bufumbira assumed increasingly strategic importance in his military operations. Through a caprice of location, geography, and ethnicity, Bufumbira now found itself defined not as a dissident marcher province but as an essential base for Rwanda expansion. The advantages of this collaborative role would not be lost upon the Bafumbira. The final years of Rwabugiri's reign were tranquil. If the repressive actions of Buuki initially had convinced the Bafumbira of the folly of open resistance, the scale of Rwabugiri's expeditionary force and its seeming invincibility now affirmed Rwandan hegemony as an apparently incontestable condition of residence on these well-trafficked plains.

With Rwabugiri's death in 1896, much of the region regained its autonomy as powerful client clans in Mulera defied the efforts of his successor, Musinga, to reoccupy the north. Only Bufumbira, under a new prince, Nyindo, retained open allegiance to the Rwanda court. Even here, Musinga's control was localized, defined not as a comprehensive hegemony but by networks of patronage and alliance with specific collaborative clans. The nature of this affiliation would elude the Europeans who sought to control the region. Rather, they attributed to Nyindo, the residential chief, the attributes of absolute jurisdiction and authority which they had been led to believe marked the operation as well as the ideology of the Rwanda kingdom.

THE GERMAN PRESENCE

Germany's approval of the Congolese Declaration of Neutrality in 1885 and the Belgian occupation of Bufumbira in 1898 ironically counselled restraint in an area in which Germany might legitimately claim effective occupation by virtue of its 1897 treaty with the Rwanda court. Belgian control of Bufumbira, despite its status as a northern province of Rwanda, remained uncontested. Although the Germans never extended their patrols north of the volcanoes, the affinity of the populations of the Mulera and Bufumbira plains, derived from a shared ethnicity, their commitment to the same grassland corridor, and their common fortunes as coveted marcher areas of the Rwanda kingdom, gave the Bafumbira a high degree of alertness to the actions of the Germans in Mulera.

¹⁶ Zakayo Rwandusya, 'The Origin and Settlement of People of Bufumbira', in *A History of Kigezi in South-west*

Uganda, ed. Donald Denoon, Kampala n.d., p. 67.

¹⁷ Mateke, 'Bufumbira', pp. 37-8.

During the first decade of the German presence, responsibility for the kingdom of Rwanda rested with the military command at Bujumbura (Usumbura), a post at the northern end of Lake Tanganyika. While the absence of resident officials made serious supervision of the Rwandan court impossible, the manner in which the ruler, Musinga, presented himself to the Germans encouraged their confidence in his good intent. The initial expediency of treating Rwanda as a protected state soon consolidated into German policy of securing Musinga's authority at all costs. For Musinga, whose claim to the throne was highly dubious and who had seen the regions conquered by Rwabugiri slip from his control, the appearance of the Germans was providential. It would be many years before the Germans would fully appreciate the magnitude of his deceit and political acumen.

The decision of the Germans to remain initially aloof from the internal politics of Rwanda reflected their marginal concern with the region and their unwillingness to invest themselves in more than the nominal demonstration of occupation necessary to secure the area against Belgian and British penetration. It was a policy which gave almost unconditional licence to Musinga. And Musinga, appreciating the opportunities of this mandate, played it out, with often infuriating skill, within the traditional role of client. Hiding both his contempt and intent behind a 'mask of politeness'¹⁸, he protected his own interests while immobilizing any unwanted directives from the Germans. Musinga's skill was such that at no point did they question his loyalty or resolve. Rather, his prevarications and evasions were mistaken for inefficiency and helplessness. Despite ample evidence of Musinga's ingenuity when motivated, his ineffectualness was attributed to his lack of authority or to his apathy and indolence.¹⁹ Musinga's strategy served him well. While the Germans would have been quick to respond to defiance, they were paralysed by his professions of good will. Wintgens would note in 1913: 'Open refusal to obey is not in the Tutsi character; he makes promises in the usual way; the result for us is the same . . . no practical results.'²⁰ Only in those areas which reinforced the existing patronage system or which offered new opportunities for power or profit would the Germans find a ready ally in Musinga.

The very nature of this contest, in which paralysing delays, displaced culpability, and protestations of good intent became the counters in a prolonged and complex game, discouraged the Germans from more intensive intervention. Their fragile claims to authority were better served by avoiding an open confrontation with the court. This again, Musinga appreciated and used to his advantage.

Musinga's position was protected as well by the very convergence of his goals with those of the Germans. For both, if for rather different reasons, control of the north had highest priority. The Germans, concerned above all with validating their claims to the controversial territory which lay north and west of Musinga's Kingdom, had every incentive for granting Musinga their unconditional support in his attempts to reassert Rwanda's hegemony over these disaffected areas.

German activity in northern Rwanda would be highly unsystematic and intermittent prior to the establishment of a post at Ruhengiri in 1909. It would be marked as well by its arbitrary and adversarial character. There is no suggestion that German officers

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ian Linden, *Church and Revolution in Rwanda, Urundi*, p. 158.

Manchester 1977, p. 83.

²⁰ Des Forges, *Musinga*, p. 143. Louis, *Ruanda-*

countenanced the marauding engaged in by unsupervised Congolese patrols. It was their practice, however, to exact supplies without payment and to retaliate indiscriminately when their requests were resisted or when incidents occurred.²¹ The harshness of their tactics were not without local precedent; what was at issue was the utter caprice of their actions. In a region where alliances and hostilities played themselves out in a very explicit calculus of clan or clientage, and where even the punitive expeditions of the Rwanda court focused on certain communities, the German penchant for ranging through an area and 'shooting at sight' at 'friendlies' and 'resistors' alike, appeared fearsome.²²

German priorities became apparent in northern Rwanda in 1904 when they mounted a punitive expedition to stop the harassment of the White Fathers Mission at Rwaza. There were at the time no German posts in the region. The establishment of the mission just south of the volcanoes in November 1903 served as an indispensable indicator of German settlement on their northern frontier. The mission also offered an important barrier to Belgian expansion south of the Mfumbiro range. The imperious practices of the White Fathers were implemented by the fifty Sukuma auxiliaries assigned by the Germans to guard the station. They exacted cattle, produce, and land at will.²³ The surrounding populations soon found themselves conscripted in a brick-making operation which required 800 workers per day.²⁴ Those who challenged the mission's demands were subject to quick retaliation even when charges proved false. On these forays, settlements and crops were destroyed and those who resisted killed.²⁵

The siege of the mission station at Rwaza in late July 1904 came in response to a series of such mission expeditions, some of which had been augmented by passing German patrols.²⁶ It remained, however, just that as the firearms of the Fathers counselled against any direct assault on the station itself. Prompt mission action in dealing with later incidents confirmed their military ascendancy on the Mulera Plain. Most conspicuously, it consolidated the Father's position as warrior-patron. Des Forges reports:

The people in the immediate vicinity of the mission quickly realized that safety and profit lay on the side of the Fathers. Mobs of a thousand or more swelled the ranks of the attacking missionaries and joined in pillaging their less fortunate neighbors. The most valuable booty captured was of course cattle. The Fathers kept some . . . gave others to the Fathers from Nyindo, and then, like Rwandan abatware back from expedition, distributed the rest to their most valorous followers.²⁷

The dominance of the White Fathers, however useful to the Germans, would not be sufficient, for the Germans were concerned not with local politics, but with the impressions their claimed occupation of the north would create on their competitors,

²¹ Louis, *ibid.*

²² F. Geraud, 'The Settlement of the Bakiga', in *South-west Uganda*, p. 53. D. Z. Rwabuhigi, 'Chief Katuregye: the Man and His Times', in *South-west Uganda*, p. 143. Lt. Col. C. Delme-Radcliffe, 'Extracts from Typescript Diary Report on the Delimitation of the Anglo-German Boundary, Uganda, 1902-1904', in *Uganda Journal*, 11 (1947), pp. 9-29, p. 18. Ewart S. Grogan and Arthur H. Sharp, *From Cape to Cairo*, London, 1900, p. 135.

²³ Geraud, 'Bakiga Settlement', p. 53.

²⁴ Linden, *Rwanda*, p. 36.

²⁵ P. Felix Dufays, *Pages D'Épopée, Africaine: Jours Troublés*, Ixelles, 1928, p. 30.

²⁶ Des Forges, *Musinga*, p. 70.

²⁷ The account of the rebellion at Rwaza may be found in Dufays, *Jours Troublés*, pp. 34-43. Des Forges, *Musinga*, pp. 70-2 and Linden, *Rwanda*, pp. 52-3 supplement this document with the mission diaries and correspondence of the White Fathers.

Belgium and Great Britain. On October 1904 German troops moved into Mulera with a cruel and mechanical efficiency. Wherever they ranged, fields, plantations, and huts were destroyed. The pitiless character of the German operation was ensured by von Grawert's reliance on Barundi mercenaries who perceived the occasion as an opportunity to avenge themselves upon the Banyarwanda. They were, Dufays notes, 'unrelenting'.²⁸ The scale of the devastation was such that the Fathers felt compelled to intercede. von Grawert suspended the Mulera campaign on the condition that it be known that at the slightest indication of hostility, all settlements and fields within the implicated region would be razed each season at harvest. Dufays records: 'As the stomach provides the best counsellor, the threat was received with the protestations of submission.'²⁹

Musinga, encouraged by this demonstration of German support, saw their patronage as an opportunity to re-establish the authority of the Rwanda court in areas which had been abandoned following the death of Rwabugiri. The reoccupation of the north drew upon a variety of traditional strategies. Favoured retainers were deployed to unpacified areas, courtiers of proven fidelity were sent to replace suspect chiefs, and absentee chiefs were ordered to assume residence in the areas which they commanded.³⁰ 'Chiefs who had not visited since Rwabugiri's day appeared at Rwaza and shamelessly expressed their thanks to the missionaries for enabling them to collect crop dues.'³¹ The lack of precedent for such intensive occupation of the northern provinces, their ill-defined mandate, and the critical presence of the armed White Fathers created new potentialities for abuse which went well beyond the mechanisms available to even the most powerful of traditional Rwanda rulers.

The White Fathers, shaken by the wide-scale resistance to their posts and supply networks,³² found the coalition with Musinga's chiefs a welcome alternative to an abandonment of the north. The alliance would also have wider political implications. 'After the 1904 crisis there was an unwritten entente between the court, the White Fathers and the Germans. Each party recognized that any lasting alliance between the other two could render it impotent.'³³ The mission at Rwaza proved an essential element in Musinga's reoccupation of the Mulera plain. Rwanda chiefs sought the support of the Fathers in the collection of tribute, in the execution of court decisions and in the enlistment of reluctant lineage heads to serve as local representatives.³⁴

Often the missionaries would send one of their men in the suite of the notables as they collected their taxes: the presence of this representative of the Europeans, even though he was not armed, ordinarily sufficed to make the Abahutu meet the notables' demands. One notable was told by the Abathutu, 'If you had not had the men of 'Bwana' with you, you would have found nothing here but sticks to chase you away.'³⁵

Despite Musinga's extravagant claims regarding the legitimacy of Rwandan hegemony over the north, his activity during this period was confined to those areas which had independently attracted European settlement. As Europeans operations in northern Rwanda were sharply circumscribed, so too were those of the court for Musinga's tributary claims rested upon his ability to enlist the Germans and

²⁸ *Musinga*, p. 71.

²⁹ *Jours Troublés*, p. 42.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Des Forges, *Musinga*, pp. 146-8.

³² Linden, *Rwanda*, p. 68.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

³⁵ Des Forges, *Musinga*, pp. 157, 160.

missionaries as his allies. Only where open terrain and heavy cultivation offered the European ample provisions, optimal mobility, and a strategic base for the surveillance of the frontier would Rwanda influence be pressed.

In 1907 Germany assumed direct administrative control in Rwanda with the establishment of a Residency at Kigali. The reluctant Musinga, well aware that the posting of Germans near his court would seriously contaminate both his autonomy and his ability to manipulate them to his advantage, attempted to impede the construction of the station.³⁶ His apprehension was misplaced. The Germans were by then convinced that it was essential to rule through Musinga and his provincial officials. The commitment had been made by 1905: 'The ideal is: unqualified recognition of the authority of the sultans from us, whether through taxes or other means, in a way that will seem to them as little burden as possible; this will link their interests with ours'.³⁷ The consequence, ironically, would be to give Musinga unprecedented control and immunity. With the continuing autonomy of court politics assured, Musinga sought to exploit the German presence to extend his control into areas which had long resisted Batutsi occupation. The Germans, it was quickly appreciated, were essential to the reassertion of Rwandan control in the outlying regions of the north. Expansion into the north was critical as well for German interests. Faced with conspicuous incidents of brigandage and attacks upon caravans, and with the demonstrated disaffection of the northern clans, the Resident viewed the pacification of region as an essential dimension of German claims to Mfumbiro. As Linden notes, 'Whilst negotiations over Mfumbiro continued he could not afford to be seen presiding over a rabble of war lords.'³⁸

In the absence of any German installations in Mulera, the Rwanda court became the instrument for imperial action. Rwanda claims in the north, however spurious, were essential to Germany's negotiations with Great Britain and Belgium. In this wider context, continuing unrest, however localized, could not be tolerated, for it would cast doubt on German claims to effective occupation. Although the Germans were committed to the systematic pacification of northern Rwanda, they made no effort to occupy even the more accessible areas of the Mulera Plain until 1909. Once again, the catalyst was not any local exigency but the challenge of a European power. On 15 November 1908 Belgium annexed the Congo Free State. In the north, Congolese forces moved south of the volcanoes to establish a station on Lake Bulera. In response to German protestations, an agreement was signed in February of 1909 between the German Resident and the Belgium Commandant at Rutshuru prohibiting either power from occupying Lake Bulera and the Mfumbiro ridge as the provisional frontier. Belgium refused to acknowledge the agreement. The following month, the Germans established a post at Ruhengiri, some fifteen miles south-west of Lake Mulera.³⁹

Despite the intermittent presence of German troops at Ruhengiri,⁴⁰ the White Fathers remained the 'effective rulers' of the region.⁴¹ Located in unadministered or unevenly monitored areas, their wide-ranging catechists and their command of Runyarwanda drew them into local politics. They in turn generated a complex political

³⁶ Ibid., p. 160.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 126.

³⁸ von Grawert, quoted in René Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi*, New York, 1970, p. 49.

³⁹ *Rwanda*, p. 82.

⁴⁰ Louis, *Ruanda-Urundi*, pp. 74, 178.

⁴¹ Ibid., 178.

arena in their need for labour, livestock, and supplies. The Bahutu, whether voluntarily seeking protection with the Fathers against local representatives of Musinga or being impressed into tributary services, clearly had come to regard the European missionary as an essential buffer in dealing with both the Germans and the court.

BUFUMBIRA UNDER BELGIAN OCCUPATION

The major portion of the territory ceded to Great Britain in 1910 had been under Belgian jurisdiction for twenty-five years. The conditions of the 1885 Declaration permitted the Congolese forces to range uncontested through the territory north of Lake Kivu. No population would be spared the memory of Belgian predations.

Bufumbira, which lay in the same ecological zone as the Rutshuru post, quickly drew the attention of the Belgian garrison despite its acknowledged status as a province of the Rwanda kingdom. The accessibility and resources of the Bufumbira plain encouraged Belgian encroachment. Unlike the Germans, whose tactical decisions in the disputed zone were dictated by their concern for the impression they would create in Europe, the Congolese forces defined their presence through wide-scale raiding and through the intimidation of local chiefs.

Oral evidence from Bufumbira places the initial incursions of Belgian patrols around 1898.⁴² Despite the fact that they were entering a centralized area with established patterns for mobilizing for men and tribute, the Belgians chose an openly adversary stance. Advancing into the region in a series of 'deadly raids' in which they 'seized anything valuable they came across', their predations were quickly challenged by representatives of the Rwanda court. The local forces, although reputed to number 'all able-bodied men', were no match for the well-armed Congolese troops. Formal opposition collapsed with the death of several chiefs. More significantly, Bufumbira was abandoned to the Belgians as the royal representatives fled south to the Rwanda court. Nyindo, the ranking Mututsi, chose refuge to the north, in the kingdom of Kayonza.⁴³

The loss of all chiefs who might mediate the Belgian presence had devastating consequences. In the memories of the Bufumbira: '[Belgian] rule was very harsh and caused terrible human suffering and humiliations. Their followers raped African women frequently and there was a lot of human degradation.'⁴⁴

In the ensuing vacuum, Belgian predations forced the unprotected populations to abandon their fields to seek refuge in volcanic caves. The strategy proved far more disruptive than the raids themselves for the fugitives, pressed by the erratic pattern of marauding to remain hidden in forest caves, were unable to return to their fields. The effect was an ecological crisis of regional proportions. Mateke observes, 'In such a situation no economic activity could be carried on. During this time of uncertainty and

⁴² Linden, *Rwanda*, p. 60.

⁴³ This date may well be correlated with the evacuation of the Belgian posts to the south following the mutinies of 1897 and with the German challenge to Belgian reoccupation of the Kivu area prior to the Beth-

Heq Agreement of 1899. See Louis, *Ruanda-Urundi*, pp. 43-4.

⁴⁴ Mateke, 'Bufumbira', p. 41. Des Forges, *Musinga*, p. 180.

fear, family life in Bufumbira was disrupted and a great famine locally known as Urwamavuta cleared very many people . . . Many Bafumbira lives were lost during this period of terrible suffering.⁴⁵

The severe dislocations caused both by indiscriminate Belgian raiding and by the ensuing famine counselled new strategies for collaboration. Immunity from Congolese patrols was secured by the remnant client chiefs by sending tribute directly to the major Belgian post at Rutshuru.⁴⁶ The parsimony of this arrangement, which ensured the Belgians a constant and predictable supply of beer, honey, and livestock, the traditional items of tribute, was not lost upon the new overlords. Nyindo, the fugitive royal representative, was 'sent for' and reinstated as ruler of Bufumbira.⁴⁷ Although the Belgians made no effort to systematically monitor the region, a new post, Kisoro, was established on the central plain. The immunities conferred on the Bafumbira through regularized rendering of tribute were evident by 1909. The British Kivu Mission found the Central Bufumbira to be 'richly cultivated and densely populated [with] cattle everywhere to be seen'.⁴⁸ Outlying areas beyond the control of Nyindo's client-chiefs continued to feel the full force of the Congolese patrols. The populations on the volcanic slopes had been so 'thoroughly looted' by the Belgians that 'no sheep, goats, or cattle had been left'.⁴⁹

To speak, however, of a Bufumbira 'united only by hatred toward the Belgians'⁵⁰ does little justice to the complexity of the political field which Nyindo sustained during the Belgian period. There can be little question that the Belgians consistently exacted services and tribute without compensation.⁵¹ It is also clear that they found willing collaborators among the local Bafumbira, particularly those who had already committed themselves to the Rwanda court. For these clients, the Belgians offered yet another channel for personal gain. Ireland noted: 'The Belgians merely appoint as "neaparas" men who tell them who has cattle, etc., and where they hide them.'⁵² In this context, as in traditional systems of patronage, information played an important role in the wider system of protection and reward. Now, however, it became the informing feature of a client's value.

Material gain here, as under Rwandan suzerainty, continued to be the primary incentive for Belgian intervention. In this, the Congolese operation sharply diverged from both the German and British experience. Where tribute was collected through local intermediaries, Belgian demands provided additional options for abuse:

The Belgians take 12 fr. per head, poll-tax and hut-tax annually. This amount is said, I believe untruly, to be remitted by the inhabitants bringing in free food for the askaris, and being credited with the amount of food brought in. In any case, only headmen are paid and these gentry never pass on payment to the peasants who supply the food. Much discontent is rife on this score alone.⁵³

Those who faced unsupervised patrols without the buffer of a client-chief were even more vulnerable. Agricultural requisitions were limited, but livestock, in their very mobility and universal value, were always of priority to raiders. The profitability

⁴⁵ Mateke, 'Bufumbira', pp. 41-2.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 41.

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 41, 38.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 41.

⁴⁹ Wm. Roger Louis, 'The Diary of the Kivu Mission',

in *Uganda Journal*, 27 (1963), pp. 187-94, p. 190.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 190-1.

⁵¹ Louis, *Ruanda-Urundi*, p. 67.

⁵² Mateke, 'Bufumbira', p. 42. Louis, 'Diary', p. 190.

⁵³ Louis, *ibid.*

of such patrols in the independent areas may be measured by the Belgian decision to place a second post on the northern slope of the Muhuvura volcano.⁵⁴

The Belgian presence in Bufumbira had a profound impact on indigenous politics for it introduced a new arena for clientage and collaboration. In the period before the Germans established a station at Ruhengiri in 1909, Musinga failed to ensure a serious hegemony over the independent clans of Mulera. Isolated from the Rwanda court by these openly dissident areas, Nyindo's position in Belgian territory was fragile yet not easily redefined. As the son of Rwabugiri and brother of Musinga, his fortunes remained tied to those of the Rwanda state. Unlike secular clients who might in such circumstances abandon a former affiliation with impunity, Nyindo, as a royal Mututsi, had to play out his uncertain exile on traditional terms.

The premisses of Rwanda suzerainty would be immediately and profoundly changed by the Belgians. Nyindo's defeat and flight were unprecedented. Beyond this, the very return and reinstatement of Nyindo affirmed the ascendancy of a new overlord, one moreover whose cruel indices of fealty bore little resemblance to the complex interplay of the traditional system of clientage. It is a measure of Nyindo's own skill and of his flexibility that he was able to move into such a potentially treacherous relationship without event.

Nyindo's accommodation to Belgian hegemony was played out against his awareness of the growing power of the White Fathers in northern Rwanda. Within six months of the foundation of the Rwaza mission, he sent his ranking chief to the Fathers. He himself appeared in July of 1905.⁵⁵ His motives, presumably, were complex but he could not fail to appreciate the advantage of multiple clientage within the European arena. The White Fathers were, after all, Belgian. It may well be that Nyindo sought a coalition with the missionaries to ensure a greater measure of predictability and responsibility from the Rutshuru post. More immediately, their protection would ensure safe passage to the Rwanda court.

Within Bufumbira, Nyindo consolidated local support by rewarding favoured Bafumbira with cattle. This and his ability to insulate his client-clans from the direct predations of Belgian patrols widened his arena of influence among those clans which had previously resisted Rwanda hegemony.

THE BRITISH IN BUFUMBIRA

Despite the unambiguous position of the Mfumbiro range well to the west of the thirtieth meridian, Great Britain continued to assert her rights of access on the spurious ground that Henry Stanley had made six treaties in the region in 1889 as he travelled north to rescue Emin Pasha.⁵⁶ Her position was further undermined in 1908 when the Uganda-Congo Boundary Commission adjusted the thirtieth meridian twelve miles east of its assumed position. This realignment carried high political cost for it placed Lake Edward, most of the Ruwenzoris, and the valued salt centre at Katwe within Belgian territory. Only the position of Lake Albert east of the meridian gave Great Britain leverage for negotiations with Belgium.

⁵⁴ Capt. Ireland in Louis, 'Diary', p. 193.

⁵⁵ Mateke ('Bufumbira', p. 41) reports that three

additional posts were also established on the plains.

⁵⁶ Linden, *Rwanda*, p. 44.

Aware that King Leopold was ill disposed to 'part with any square foot of territory to which he might have conceivable claim',⁵⁷ Great Britain pressed to define her southwestern frontier against Germany. Germany's acknowledgement of her rights to 'Mount Mfumbiro' in 1906 and their mutual concern with Belgian activity in the Kivu region prompted Great Britain and Germany to meet in April of 1909. 'The instructions to the British members of the conference were simple: 'to come to an agreement . . . as to the meaning of the territory "Mt. Mfumbiro." '⁵⁸ Although no consensus could be reached on the definition of the term 'Mfumbiro', a secret agreement of considerable jurisdictional importance was signed on 19 May 1909 defining the Anglo-German boundary west of Lake Victoria. Under the terms of the treaty, Great Britain released her claims to the southern slope of the volcanoes to Germany who argued that the region belonged 'politically and economically' to the Rwandan kingdom. In return, Great Britain was guaranteed access to Lake Kivu.⁵⁹ The status of Bufumbira as an established satellite province of Rwanda did not enter into the deliberations although both powers had affirmed that it was 'undesirable' to violate existing political units.⁶⁰ Nor did the presence of a network of Belgian posts, irrefutable evidence of effective occupation, or the signatory status of both Germany and Great Britain to the 1884 Declaration deter Great Britain's pre-emptive advance to Lake Kivu.

Within three days of the Agreement, the British Colonial Secretary telegraphed the Acting Governor of Uganda to instruct him to establish a chain of posts to the lake to 'secur[e] Mfumbiro before the Belgians pushed their posts further to the east'. The response was prompt. As Thomas notes, 'Fifty years ago the recognized method of establishing a claim was to get there first and hoist a flag'.⁶¹

On 11 June the Kivu Mission⁶² was secretly dispatched from Mbarara, a station some fifty miles east of the thirtieth meridian. For seventeen days the expedition struck south-west through unexplored and often rugged terrain to press deep into Belgian territory. The officers of the mission were the first British to advance west of the twenty-mile corridor which served as a neutral zone securing the unsurveyed thirtieth meridian.⁶³

Although the speed and focus of the expedition circumscribed its impact, the mission did provide the first opportunity for the Bafumbira to observe the British in their official capacity. The mission would be in Belgian territory for only fifteen days, yet the manner in which they traversed the region created an unprecedented set of options and expectations for the populations they encountered. Unlike the private explorers who preceded them,⁶⁴ who were concerned only with safe passage and supplementary supplies, the mission was at all times accountable to its status as agent of Great Britain and to its need to present itself as a serious claimant to the region. The very act of establishing two bases on each side of the Bufumbira plain offered a tangible and universally appreciated symbol of this intent.

The sudden appearance of the mission on the eastern escarpment was assimilated with remarkable ease and sophistication by those who acknowledged the authority of

⁵⁷ See Louis, *Ruanda-Urundi*, pp. 11-12.

⁵⁸ Louis, 'Diary', p. 187.

⁵⁹ Louis, *Ruanda-Urundi*, p. 61.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Coote, 'Kivu Mission', p. 111.

⁶³ The Kivu Mission was comprised of a Political Officer, four Military Officers, seventy Sikhs, two Sudanese Companies and 'some' Police. *Ibid.*, p. 108.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

the Rwandan chief, Nyindo, and who had been drawn into the Belgian tributary system. Below the escarpment, at the 'most easterly point' of the Bufumbira plain, lay the settlement of Kigezi. It proved to be a Belgian post under control of a 'villainous' Swahili-speaking headman. The affiliation was no impediment. Indeed, the surrounding populations immediately responded to the prospect of a new patron although they regarded British trade goods with derision and contempt.⁶⁵ The fragility of the Belgian operation was most conspicuously marked by the defection of the headman to the British party as guide'.

Local co-operation collapsed as the mission pressed west beyond the territory controlled by the Rwandan court and encountered populations which had felt the unmediated force of Belgian patrols. Here, the relationship with the Congolese forces had deteriorated from that of subject to victim. The initial response to the appearance of the British expedition was one of terror and flight. When 'caught' and paid for food, however, they adopted 'a most friendly attitude'.⁶⁶

On 24 June the mission reached Lake Kivu. Under German protest, they abandoned their initial intent of establishing a post on the lake and withdrew north of the volcanoes. Although the British had been in patrolled Belgian territory since 19 June their presence had not been perceived. A second post, selected to offer a surveillance point between Rutshuru and the Bufumbira plain, was established at Rubona on 26 June. Local populations were quick to respond to this prospect of protection from Belgian patrols, bringing four days provisions into the British camp on the first evening.⁶⁷ The following day, the Political Officer notified the Belgians at Rutshuru of the mission's location. He informed the Commandant that he had been sent 'to take over the district', and added, 'for good measure' that Rutshuru 'appeared to be in British territory'. The effect, Coote records, 'was instantaneous'. The Belgians, upon learning of the British expedition, demanded 'immediate withdrawal'. The confrontation itself, on 28 June, proved to be both civil and advantageous as both agreed to return to their respective bases for further instruction. The mission, it developed, had little option, for they received that afternoon instructions to return immediately to Mbarara.⁶⁸

The recall carried a high political cost. Coote, in his dispatch of 28 June, wrote:

The order for withdrawal has come at a very unfortunate moment . . . Owing to the urgency of your orders to retire my hands were tied, and my withdrawal at the present juncture naturally bears the appearance of running away . . . I regret exceedingly the necessity for withdrawal, as I have already got in touch with the natives of the district, who will naturally not understand our retiring and will be slow to trust us in the future.⁶⁹

Coote's apprehension would be well placed. The Rutshuru captain, despite the mutual agreement to withdraw, occupied Rubona four hours after the British evacuation. Two

⁶⁵ Ewart Grogan, who pressed east to the slopes of Muhuvura in 1899, was the first Briton to enter Bufumbira. Although his party was small and unprovocative in its actions, 'the natives appeared to be rather disturbed, and suspicious of my intentions'. Unaware that Belgian patrols had penetrated this region and sensitive to his vulnerability, Grogan returned to the Rutshuru valley. Grogan and Sharp, *Cape to Cairo*, p. 156.

⁶⁶ Louis, 'Diary', p. 190. Coote, 'Kivu Mission', p. 106.

⁶⁷ Ireland indicates that the Belgian reimbursement for food and porters was erratic and rarely reached the individual involved: 'Only headmen are paid, and these gentry never pass on payment to the peasants who supply the food. Much discontent is rife on this score alone.' Louis, 'Diary', p. 193.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

⁶⁹ Coote, 'Kivu Mission', p. 106.

askari, one Muganda headman, and four porters who remained behind to secure additional supplies were captured. The incident further compromised the mission's rather dubious exercise in effective occupation.

The mission interrupted its seemingly ignominious retreat to halt at Kigezi to await the reply of the Belgian Commandant to their letter of protest. Despite a baldly inadequate response, the mission abandoned Bufumbira the following day without recovering the captured members of their party. In such circumstances, nothing would be done to protect the local population, who had been co-operative despite their vulnerability to punitive action by the Belgians.⁷⁰ The area adjacent to Rubona bore the greatest impact of Belgian reprisals. Congolese forces 'shot up' one village and removed several girls in retaliation for supplying food to the British.⁷¹ They also deployed themselves in a campaign of indiscriminate looting to impress upon the Bafumbira their uncontested dominance in the region.⁷² Later intelligence established that Belgian operations had been more sustained and systematic: 'All the Africans who had helped the British expedition with food supplies and information were punished by the Belgians, either by appropriation of cattle or imprisonment.'⁷³ For the Bafumbira, the contest between the two European powers had been played out cruelly and promptly.

The Kivu Mission reached Mbarara on 14 July. On 13 July the Colonial Secretary wired instructions to reoccupy Bufumbira. Hastily reassembled, the British forces left Mbarara on 22 July. Coote, with extraordinary restraint would remark, 'This time anyhow we knew the road.'⁷⁴

On 31 July the mission re-entered Bufumbira to find the Belgians 'had completely occupied the district'. Five officers and two hundred men were camped on the northern slope of Muhuvura and an armed post had been established at Kisoro. The line of posts effectively blocked British access to Lake Kivu. The mission, under orders to reoccupy the posts established during the initial expedition, was warned that an advance to Rubona would be resisted. They retired to a defensive position 'just out of rifle range' on the eastern escarpment. Each morning of the first week, the mission received an ultimatum at dawn demanding that they leave by midday. Thereafter, 'we merely sat and glared at one another.' Here, both forces remained for the following ten months, 'within four miles of each other, with no limiting line of territory, but both claiming the rights of administration over the natives in their vicinity'.⁷⁵

The British, of course, in this 'stand-still arrangement',⁷⁶ were particularly vulnerable. British credibility at the Brussels Conference required the maintenance of the Kigezi post. Yet the position, well to the west of the thirtieth meridian, had no geographical or political legitimacy. Constrained by the need to avoid any pretext for Belgian action and by instructions to remain aloof from local affairs, the British could do little to regularize or to consolidate their claim to Bufumbira.

The post of Kigezi, secured on the most fragile and spurious of terms, did serve to arrest Belgian movements east of the Bufumbira plain. The British were aware, however, that the Belgians would exploit any irregularity on their part to challenge

⁷⁰ Louis, *Ruanda-Urundi*, p. 69.

⁷¹ Louis, 'Diary', p. 192.

⁷² Coote, 'Kivu Mission', p. 107.

⁷³ Louis, *Ruanda-Urundi*, p. 274.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ 'Kivu Mission', p. 107. Louis, *Ruanda-Urundi*, p. 71. Louis, 'Diary', p. 193.

⁷⁶ Coote, 'Kivu Mission', pp. 107-8. Louis, *Ruanda-Urundi*, p. 71.

their territorial claims. Nothing would be served by an incident which might give the Belgians occasion to advance to the thirtieth meridian.

In the period prior to the resolution of the international frontier, the British officers at Kigezi could do little more than demonstrate to the Belgians their determination to retain access to the Mfumbiro range. The Kigezi garrison, however fragile an assertion of the British imperium, had pressed the contested border more than twenty miles west of the thirtieth meridian. Isolated and vulnerable, it provided an important symbolic barrier to any Belgian attempt to occupy the territory Great Britain had accorded Leopold's Association in 1894.

The proximity and number of Belgian posts on the Bufumbira plain permitted the constant surveillance of British movements. To move beyond the Kigezi garrison was to invite Belgian action, for the British position, with considerable justification, was viewed by the Belgians as a provocative incursion into their territory. The mission waited out the uncertain months of claim and counter-claim with apprehension. No efforts were made to leave the post without a large escort. Even a simple trip to the adjacent water supply was always conducted under armed escort and accompanied by a European officer.⁷⁷ Lardner would remark, 'A walk does not sound wildly exciting to the man at home; but when one has to be fully prepared to see Belgian soldiers lurking behind any suspicious bush, or to be suddenly rushed from behind and carried off a prisoner in an ignominious manner . . . well, I maintain it lends some colour to one's outing.'⁷⁸ Although contact with the Bufumbira was sharply circumscribed by the Belgian presence, the ability of the British forces to maintain their position at Kigezi, a former Belgian station, became, in itself, a political statement of some importance. Congolese patrols, while very much in evidence, made no effort to displace them.

For the populations of Bufumbira, the advent of the British in June of 1909, their abrupt withdrawal, and enigmatic return in late July created a political field of particular stress and uncertainty. The Belgians were to be feared, yet the British, who had abandoned Rubona to its fortunes, offered a dubious alternative as patrons or protectors. The situation, so openly polarized and adversarial yet so static, thrust those who were accessible to the Kigezi post and to the Belgian cordon into 'somewhat bewildering political surroundings'.⁷⁹ The initial response of the Bufumbira to the return of the British was understandably wary. When Lardner ventured north of the station to Lake Mutanda, the island populations refused either to leave the island or to speak to the British patrol.⁸⁰

For those adjacent to the Kigezi post, its sustained occupation in those initial months created an important opportunity to assess both British intent and the consistency of British action. The commissariat practices of the mission quickly differentiated them from the Belgians. While it was 'common practice' for Congolese troops to exact provisions without payment, the mission established a market at which produce could be exchanged for coloured beads and American cloth. The 'extraordinary . . . avidity' for American cloth ensured a predictable voluntary supply of local food for the post.⁸¹

⁷⁷ H. B. Thomas and A. E. Spencer, *A History of Uganda Land and Surveys*, Entebbe 1938, p. 34.

⁷⁸ Capt. F. D. Lardner, *Soldiering and Sport in Uganda*, London 1912, p. 185.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

⁸⁰ Major E. M. Jack, *On the Congo Frontier*, London 1914, p. 549.

⁸¹ Lardner, *Soldiering*, p. 186.

More significantly, the market served to contain and structure the contact of the British soldiers with the local populations.

By late October, the safety and predictability of the Kigezi post had been demonstrated. The very restraint of the British in exacting provisions from this rich and well-populated region commended them as patrons who might offer immunity from Belgian predations or the pressures of the Rwanda court. The affirmation would be of a quite literal nature as whole settlements relocated themselves below the Kigezi ridge in 'the shadow or our protection'.⁸²

Despite the mission's instructions to avoid any political activity until the boundaries were delimited, it did establish contact with Nyindo, the local representative of the Rwanda court, and with a 'small local chief'. Their relationship with Nyindo was cordial and co-operative: 'Chief Mindu . . . always did his best to supply food for our porters and guides when called upon to do so.'⁸³ No ulterior motives were attributed to Nyindo's efforts to placate the British forces. More curiously, there appears to have been no appreciation of his well-established subordinate status in the Belgian network or of the potential risk which might attend such collaborative action. The relationship of the Kigezi post to the local 'chief', in contrast, was one of open cynicism if clear mutual advantage. While he would do nothing for them without remuneration, it was also appreciated that he 'would do anything for money'. He proved to be of particular value in their clandestine efforts to obtain intelligence on the movements of Belgian forces.⁸⁴

The willingness of the Bafumbira to invest themselves in such a fragile and dangerous alliance becomes itself evidence of the pervasiveness of Belgian activity on the Bufumbira plain. Those that sought the protection of the British were under no illusions that they had secured a more powerful patron. The tentative and circumscribed actions of the Kigezi mission attested both to the adversariness of the European powers and to their rank order. Resettlement in the valley below the Kigezi station offered, however, physical immunity from Belgian patrols. It is telling in this respect that the move to the post appears to have been as 'villages *in toto*',⁸⁵ not as scattered refugees, for it suggests that the scale for political action remained the clan. Although the identity of these initial collaborative clans is not known, the location of the Kigezi post in eastern Bufumbira suggests they were the Abatongo,⁸⁶ who had resisted Rwandan hegemony and now faced, in consequence of their independence, the unmediated force of the Belgian patrols.

Commitment to British protection carried considerable political risk. Most fundamentally, the circumscribed range of the beleaguered Kigezi installation required those who would seek the support of these new European patrons to join them. Unlike traditional patterns of clientage, where multiple allegiances were played out with considerable skill and versatility, affiliation with the British station was an unambiguous and physically explicit act. This spatial marker made the collaborations highly visible and concentrated, ready targets for Belgian reprisals should the mission again withdraw. Now aware of the potentially tragic cost of local support, Lardner could venture only a wan 'Let us hope that we will not be ordered to desert them as before.'⁸⁷

⁸² Ibid., pp. 179, 200.

⁸³ Ibid., pp. 179, 199.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 166.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 171.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 179.

⁸⁷ See page 428 above.

THE MFUMBIRO AGREEMENT

In February 1910, the open contest between Belgian and British forces was abruptly suspended as Germany, Belgium, and Great Britain convened in Brussels to resolve their competing claims to the region north of Lake Kivu. The diplomatic conventions which informed this sudden and inexplicable contraction of activity would of course be unappreciated locally. During the first six months of occupation, the British Mission had relied on the Bafumbira for supplies. Once negotiations had begun, the Kigezi market was abruptly terminated, for such Commissariat arrangements were seen to have an inevitable political dimension and might be submitted as evidence of effective occupation. The tripartite Conference, faced with the reconciliation of a number of claims with acknowledged legitimacy under international law, had no desire to further complicate the terms of settlement. The local impact of the loss of this major incentive for collaboration was not considered.

The Conference radically curtailed Belgian activity on the Bufumbira plain as well. With the attention of three European powers focused on the region, the feared patrols of the Belgian forces were suspended lest they compromise Belgium's incontestable claim to an area she had dominated for over a decade.

In May of 1910, a tripartite agreement signed in Brussels reconciled the competing claims of Belgium, Germany, and Great Britain. Under the terms of the accord, the frontiers of German East Africa, the Congo State, and the Uganda Protectorate converged at the highest summit of Mount Sabinio in the Mfumbiro chain. The final assignment of this highly contested region diverged sharply from the geometric conventions which had informed imperial action west of Lake Victoria since 1885. Although the Declaration of Neutrality had protected Belgian interests in East Africa west of the thirtieth meridian, the location of Lake Albert well to the east of that line induced Belgium to forfeit her claim to Bufumbira in order to secure access to that strategic lake.

Prior to 1910, Great Britain had been constrained by bilateral treaties which placed her legitimate East African domain north of the first degree parallel and east of the thirtieth meridian. The Agreement of 1910, by awarding her the northern slopes of the Mfumbiro range, ceded her a large region beyond these co-ordinates. Bufumbira, as well as most of the modern district of Kigezi, had previously lain beyond the established British sphere of influence. The political consequence was the abrupt assumption of responsibility for a territory which had been occupied for over a decade by two competing colonial powers. That the Agreement honoured neither the geographic realities nor the political and ethnic alignments of the region could only compound the difficulties of occupation.

The total arbitrary character of these international boundaries was itself politically provocative. Even more so was the implication of the settlement for British control. Although bound by the Agreement to respond to any open acts of defiance, the Political Mission was prohibited from participating in local affairs until the frontiers were demarcated. It would be twelve months, 4 May 1911, before the survey of the Anglo-Congolese border was completed. Five months later, on 31 October, the protocol validating the Anglo-German survey was signed, permitting the resident British officer to at last invest himself in the active supervision of Bufumbira. It would

remain an ambiguous charge for yet another year for it was not until October 1912, with the creation of Kigezi District, that the residual area allocated to Great Britain in May 1910 was subdivided into a formal administrative structure.

The signatory powers had affirmed a delimitation which would employ 'natural frontiers'.⁸⁸ The realities proved otherwise. Rivers were incorporated into both the German and Congolese boundaries, but they were easily traversed and offered no barrier to the movement of populations. Most enigmatic from the local perspective were the large portions of both borders which were trigonometrically defined. The Congolese boundary required ten boundary pillars to span Bufumbira, while the Anglo-German border was an arc of five pillars bifurcating the Mulera and Bufumbira plains. These pillars, spaced at intervals of somewhat over a mile, in the absence of any local administrative structure, offered no compelling evidence of the new political realities which faced the Bafumbira.

The demarcation of the frontier between Uganda and the Belgian Congo created a new responsibility for the Political Mission at Kigezi, one which it was ill equipped to honour. Raiding across the new boundary was now defined as an act of international hostility requiring prompt action on the part of local officers. The disparity between the initial indifference of the Europeans to local politics and their sudden unsolicited intervention generated considerable hostility and confusion. Belgian protests in June 1911 to a retaliatory raid involving a murder and the abduction of twelve women is symptomatic. Both communities lay within the disputed zone and had been removed from European surveillance for several years. Neither had been informed that the territory had been ceded to Belgium on 10 May.⁸⁹ The Political Officer was reluctant to act because he was under the impression that he as yet possessed 'no express magisterial power' and was proceeding *ultra vires* on an 'informal conviction and committal' by virtue of the Belgian demands for satisfaction. Although the action was initially approved by the Crown Advocate,⁹⁰ in the following month the legality of the conviction was challenged as the area supervised by the Kigezi Mission had not yet been formally admitted to the Protectorate.⁹¹ 'Until directions have been received from His Majesty and the *new* territory comes within the provisions of the Uganda Order in Council, he [the Political Officer] would not have jurisdiction over the natives living in such new territory.'⁹² The ambiguous jurisdictional status of unincorporated territories also created a technical immunity from the Penal Code. Their populations, it was ruled, 'cannot be treated as Native Uganda subjects'.⁹³

The constraints against local intervention during the period ensured that the triumph of the territorial acquisition quickly degenerated into frustration and technical paralysis. Constrained by lack of staff and by the inability to designate any local figure, however conspicuous, reliable or legitimate as a British agent, the Kigezi mission had no prospect of engaging in any systematic contact with the populations they nominally controlled. British engagement during these ill-defined years was confined to touring and to military operations when unrest appeared to challenge the European presence.

⁸⁸ Lardner, *Soldiering*, p. 179.

⁸⁹ Louis, *Ruandai-Urundi*, p. 60.

⁹⁰ Ian Brownlie, *African Boundaries*, London 1979, pp. 698-9, 994.

⁹¹ Entebbe Secretariat, 1981, Political Officer to Chief

Secretary, 20 June 1911.

⁹² *Ibid.*, Chief Secretary to Political Officer, 7 July 1911.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, Crown Advocate to Chief Secretary, 8 and 10 Aug. 1911.

The confrontations of the period in British territory were confined to the highlands;⁹⁴ Bufumbira remained conspicuously quiet.⁹⁵

The immunities of this period from British demands could only have encouraged in a chief as skilled as Nyindo an unprecedented sense of European vulnerability. Certainly he was not captive in their priorities. Granted permission to return to the Rwanda court for two months, he returned eight months later. The Political Officer noted with some indignation: 'Nyindo certainly abused this privilege by remaining absent for some eight months, and the absence of the hereditary chiefs at this early stage of the development of the district caused serious inconvenience.'⁹⁶ It is a measure of his disengagement from local affairs and from any intelligence of events in German territory that he was unaware that northern Rwanda was in open rebellion from the highlands to Lake Kivu and that representatives of the Rwanda court had abandoned their stations to return south to the protection of the capital. The Germans, in an attempt to contain the advance of the rebels, had established on 5 February four 'emergency posts' along the Kigali-Ruhengiri supply line.⁹⁷ Nyindo, it would appear, did not find it appropriate to inform the British officer of these events on his return.

Although well to the north of the disturbances, Nyindo appeared at the Rwaza mission on 15 February on his way south to acquire regimental protection. A force of two thousand men was soon assembled and moved north to the Mulera plain but was turned back at the German cordon.⁹⁸

These events put a very particular construction on Nyindo's declaration, soon after his return to Bufumbira, of his 'professed unadulterated admiration and loyalty' to the British.⁹⁹

In March of 1912 the British faced a major jurisdictional crisis in Bufumbira. It would ultimately be played out between Nyindo and the Chief Secretary at Entebbe. Although the Secretariat resolution appeared a cautious, even innocuous one, it seriously compromised British credibility during the early administrative period and remained a provocative legacy throughout the war years. At issue was the determination of Nyindo to continue to pay fealty to King Musinga of Rwanda. The Political Officer, sensitive to Bufumbira's position as an 'integral part of the kingdom of Ruanda', feared that if the traditional pattern were now challenged, Musinga 'would be quite within his rights if he withdrew Nindo and all of the Watussi and cattle into German territory'.¹⁰⁰ It was this threat of depopulation, of course, not any intrinsic concern with the legitimacy of Nyindo's continuing identification, which led the local officer to urge British recognition of the existing tributary network. In an effort to regularize what was unquestionably an irregular political concession, the Political Officer stipulated that permission be granted under the following provisos:

⁹⁴ Ibid., District Commissioner, Ankole to Chief Secretary, 31 Aug. 1911.

⁹⁵ See Elizabeth Hopkins, 'The Nyabingi cult of Southwestern Uganda', in *Protest and Power in Black Africa, 1886-1966*, ed. Robert Rotberg and Ali Mazrui, New York 1970, pp. 258-336.

⁹⁶ Entebbe Secretariat, 2489, Political Officer to Chief Secretary, 7 Mar. 1912.

⁹⁷ Des Forges, *Musinga*, p. 188. Alison Des Forges,

'The Drum is Greater Than the Shout: the 1912 Rebellion in Northern Rwanda', in *Banditry, Rebellion and Social Protest in Africa*, London 1986, p. 324. Linden, *Rwanda*, p. 107. Louis, *Ruanda-Urundi*, p. 155.

⁹⁸ Linden, *Rwanda*, p. 107.

⁹⁹ Entebbe Secretariat, 2489, Political Officer to Chief Secretary, 7 Mar. 1912.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

That Musinga should clearly understand that he has no call on the personal services of Nindo or his men [and] that Nindo should be informed that the privilege to visit Musinga and to pay tribute in no way exempts him from any tax or call on the personal services of himself or his men that the British Government may institute.¹⁰¹

The Chief Secretary, in replying, acknowledged a fundamental colonial dilemma: the need to reconcile general administrative dicta with the realities of the local political situation. As was so often the case, a resolution was effected by officially affirming the principles of the issue while simultaneously acknowledging their unenforceability. The responsibility of the local officer then became that of ensuring that the inevitable transgressions be executed with discretion. Evasion of administrative regulations was not merely an African premise but an acknowledged colonial expediency. The degree to which defiance of stated central policy was openly sanctioned is reflected in the Chief Secretary's reply:

I regret that the Governor is unable to accept any proposal whereby Chiefs in British Territory pay tribute to Chiefs in Foreign Territory. If Nyindo and other Watussi Chiefs wish to do this privately no objection need be raised, provided no official cognizance is taken and no obligation of any nature accepted.¹⁰²

The prospect of Nyindo's defection betrayed British awareness of their vulnerability on their south-western frontier. While such an exodus would seriously compromise the British position in Bufumbira, the Chief Secretary stipulated that any withdrawal of Nyindo and his followers into German territory must not be opposed or obstructed.¹⁰³ He would not know that on the very day of his dispatch the Germans with three thousand Rwanda auxiliaries had encircled and slaughtered those within the rebel base.¹⁰⁴ Within the month, the surviving leaders had been executed and the German forces had suspended their 'demonstration' campaign. By 5 May the tension of the punitive operation was spent and the population was judged to be 'thoroughly intimidated and 'obedient' '.¹⁰⁵

The German priorities had been clear. The Rwanda Resident, Gudovius, who himself participated in the campaign, had ordered: 'The purpose of the expedition was "punishment of the insubordinate districts and their peoples and chiefs by causing the greatest possible damage until complete submission"'.¹⁰⁶ It was, as Louis observes, 'the worst example of German brutality' in a colonial episode which had openly acknowledged the punitive expedition as the 'principle means of maintaining German authority'.¹⁰⁷ The toll in human lives, although undocumented, is estimated to have ranged in the hundreds.¹⁰⁸

Musinga's regiments had found, in the licence and unreflexive aggression of the German troops, a perfect foil for their own agenda of looting and retribution.¹⁰⁹ In the aftermath, northern Rwanda, battered by the devastations of the campaign, fell prey to

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid., Chief Secretary to Political Officer, 10 Apr. 1912.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Louis, *Ruanda-Urundi*, p. 156. Des Forges 'Rebellion', p. 325.

¹⁰⁵ Des Forges, *Musiinga*, p. 193. Louis, *Ruanda-Urundi*, p. 157.

¹⁰⁶ Louis, *ibid.*, p. 156.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 203-4.

¹⁰⁸ Rene Lemarchand, 'The Coup in Rwanda', in *Protest and Power in Black Africa, 1886-1966*, ed. Robert Rotberg and Ali Mazrui, New York 1970, pp. 887-923, p. 887.

¹⁰⁹ See Des Forges, *Musiinga*, p. 192.

intensified occupation by the Rwanda court. In such circumstances, Nyindo had every reason to retain and value his hegemony over populations which were neither embattled nor hostile and who viewed him as an indispensable patron and buffer against the European. He would affirm as well, at least superficially, an attachment to his new overlords who had, by 1912, demonstrated that they were both ineffectual and ill informed and most anxious to avoid any open conflict with their errant collaborator.

THE LEGACY

On 26 October 1912, a full year after the demarcation of the Congolese and German East African frontiers, the Political Officer summoned 'influential indigenous leaders and outstanding personalities' to his post at Kigezi. His intention was to subdivide the frontier zone into clearly defined administrative units and to assign each to a ranking chief 'selected by the natives themselves'.¹¹⁰ The comprehensive nature of the exercise posed serious logistical problems. Confronted with a region of some 1900 square miles, the local officer had little option but to divide the district in a fashion which would consolidate his relationship with existing or potentially valuable collaborators. The informing rationale would be that of 'tribal' identity. By defining his actions as a validation of existing ethnicities, the Political Officer gave them independent legitimacy. There is no evidence that in 1912 any effort was made to explore or confirm their reality. Nor, in succeeding decades, would the inaccuracy of these official 'ethnicities' be admitted. For the Bafumbira, the British strategy introduced a radical and unprecedented premiss for affiliation. All, whatever their different ethnic identity and long-standing objections, found themselves defined as 'Banyarwanda' and as docile subjects of the Rwanda state.

Rivalry with Belgium had dictated the position of the first British post at Kigezi. Although its location in Bufumbira was incidental, it did offer the local officer three years in which to determine the politics of the surrounding plain. Certainly the Belgians who had preceded them had developed in their decade of occupation an accurate sense of Bafumbira politics and of the strategies to be used in areas under the protection of Nyindo and his client chiefs. They were also clearly aware that large areas of Bufumbira were not controlled by the Rwanda court and raided these regions with impunity. Imperial actions had been played out alongside local political affiliations for fourteen years. Now, as the British assumed administrative responsibility for their south-western frontier, the complexity of the situation was denied despite their avowed commitment to appoint chiefs who had local legitimacy. In 1912, as during the Belgian period, the influence of the Rwanda court north of the volcanoes was both fragile and highly localized with large areas remaining independent or avowedly hostile. Yet the British asserted that the artificial and highly arbitrary frontier zone which they were now required to control was an established province of the Rwanda kingdom.

The motives underlying this false assumption were of course highly political. By committing themselves to the Rwanda model, the British had no need to determine Nyindo's actual jurisdiction on the Bufumbira plain. It was assumed that Bufumbira,

¹¹⁰ Annual Report, Western Province, 1912-13.

as a province of Rwanda, had a centralized administrative hierarchy and that efficient tributary networks were in place and could be easily co-opted. No attention was given to the highly focused and non-territorial character of the alliances which Nyindo and his client chiefs forged with local clans. Nyindo, despite his royal status, could offer no predictable access to the inhabitants of the region he dominated let alone to those areas to the west and north beyond the range of the court.

The British envisaged control in Bufumbira as a monopoly of the Batutsi. Nyindo's personal clients, perceived by the British as chiefs, appeared suitable lower-level administrators. In reality, the three subchiefs appointed by the district administration on 26 October were not royal Batutsi on provincial assignment but leaders of local collaborative clans who had found it expedient to seek the patronage and protection of Nyindo. Yet the British need to validate Batutsi rule was such that their identity as Bafumbira was ignored. As they could only profit from this aggrandisement of their actual position, Nyindo's clients had no incentive to challenge their new status as officials of Musinga.

Nyindo, in turn, was clearly aware that collaboration would place him in a position of unprecedented advantage. Not only would his imperial jurisdiction extend well beyond his established range of influence, but British reluctance to press for any clear accountability within this new mandate offered him new options to expand his hegemony on traditional terms. He was encouraged in this by the indiscriminate assignment to him of all territory to the Congolese border.

The unquestioning endorsement of Nyindo and those he presented as his chiefs represented a calculated expediency on the part of the local officer. He must have had some misgivings about the exercise for he avoided any systematic subdivision of Bufumbira. Asserting 'there was no need yet for many chiefs',¹¹¹ the Political Officer chose on this occasion only to validate the 'territorial' rights of the client-chiefs who attended Nyindo. The mythical claims of the Rwanda state proved too useful to be jeopardized by a review of actual alignments. By confirming the Rwanda presence throughout Bufumbira, the British were released from any direct accountability to local supervision. Nyindo's local influence remained not only unchallenged, but untested.

The conceit of Rwanda hegemony dominated thirty years of imperial contact. That the British would sanction a Batutsi monopoly of office until 1929 despite ample opportunity to observe the separate political identity of the Bafumbira confirms its administrative usefulness.¹¹² The persistence and success of the illusion rested on local priorities, however, not upon Protectorate intent. Nyindo and his collaborative clans had every incentive to co-operate with local officials and to convince them of their enthusiasm for British overrule. For their part, the independent clans co-operated in keeping up the illusion of Batutsi control for their own purposes. However bitter their pre-colonial history of opposition to absorption by Rwanda, the Bafumbira saw great advantages in allowing Nyindo to present himself to the British as the chief of a well

¹¹¹ Ngologoza, *Kigezi*, p. 55.

¹¹² British commitment to the 'normalcy' of Batutsi rule in Bufumbira continued to contaminate official perceptions throughout the colonial period. Baxter in 1960 asserted: 'The Tusi have done badly in Bufumbira where they hold only one of six chiefdoms.' T. W. Baxter, 'The Kiga', in *East African Chiefs*, ed. Audrey I.

Richards, London 1960, pp. 278-310, p. 292. Even Denoon, although well versed in the political history of Kigezi district, would argue: 'These subordinate chiefs were not all Batutsi, and did not, therefore, have much traditional claim to authority.' D. Denoon, 'The allocation of official posts in Kigezi, 1908-1930', in *South-west Uganda*, p. 219.

integrated and systematically administered province of Rwanda. The failure of these independent clans to expose the fiction of Nyindo's traditional jurisdiction over them is a measure of their political astuteness not their docility. Alert to both British and German deference to the Rwanda state and to the demonstrated skill of Musinga's court in subverting German imperial claims, they had reason to be confident that British interference would be minimized if mediated by this skilled and prominent prince.

Unaffiliated Bafumbira were also drawn into tacit collaboration with Nyindo by his firm commitment to local political values. His protective generosity to those Bafumbira who had become his clients and his familiar priorities made him indisputably preferable to an unknown or untested chief. All Bafumbira, whatever their attitudes toward the Rwanda court, had reason to appreciate the role Nyindo had assumed as protector and buffer against both Belgians and British prior to the boundary settlement in 1910.

As they faced growing administrative claims on the community level, the Bafumbira found their new status as 'Banyarwanda' highly advantageous. It was a designation which even the most defiant clans found useful. All appreciated that as independent clans they had no prospect of neutralizing the European intruder. In this new political context, Nyindo offered a welcome buffer to direct contact with the British. Not only had he demonstrated his ability to manipulate Protectorate officials on his terms and to keep them isolated and ill informed, but he was himself intent on impeding any administrative demands which would disrupt his local networks of patronage and privilege. His continuing commitment to traditional priorities on traditional terms commended a conspiracy of silence.

To the British, the situation as they had defined it in the new county of Bafumbira appeared optimal. Rwanda conventions of chieftaincy were potentially well suited to imperial operations, for recruitment was non-hereditary and tenure at the discretion of the ranking official. To be balanced against this, of course, was an appreciation that established chiefs, however erratic or indifferent, had local credibility and were preferable to untested replacements. It was a tension Nyindo exploited masterfully.

Nyindo's status as a ranking member of the royal clan, although it gave him no hereditary rights to the Bafumbira chieftaincy, lent weight to his incumbency. It intensified, British commitment to his appointment on the analogy of the ruling hierarchy in German Rwanda and British fears that, if antagonized, he might abandon British territory to rejoin Musinga there.

British enchantment with Nyindo was brief. His co-operation during the first fragile year of administrative engagement, however, was exemplary. As the district officer stressed in his initial report: 'I wish it to be clearly understood that with the exception of the Batussi in Ruanda [Bafumbira], there are no persons in the District of sufficient intelligence to act as chiefs.'¹¹³ If the British initially anticipated that Nyindo would respond to his appointment by disengaging himself from politics in German Rwanda, they were quickly disenchanted. Within the year, the District Commissioner conceded:

It is evident that Nyindo and Birahira have been playing a double game for some years. [They] seem to pay more attention to the instructions of the autocratic Musinga, than they do to the

¹¹³ Annual Report, Kigezi District, 1913-14.

British Government. These Batutsi will I think eventually all return with their cattle to German East Africa, and it will be a distinct advantage to [British] Ruanda if they do so.¹¹⁴

He failed to appreciate, however, that Nyindo continued to control German Ndorwa and was in 1914 collecting cattle and tribute there for the Rwanda court.¹¹⁵

The events of August 1914 left no illusion as to Nyindo's priorities. Within the month, Nyindo moved south into German territory.¹¹⁶ Protectorate officials construed the defection rather too simply as an act of treachery and denounced the Batutsi as 'the most double-faced natives in Africa'.¹¹⁷ The Provincial Commissioner was provoked to remark: 'When I visited Nyindo and his people last March they were most affable and apparently quite in love with the "Ba Ingerezi"; at the time it struck me that they rather "over-did" it [and now] have proved themselves to be utter frauds.'¹¹⁸ That the Belgians, who had so harshly controlled the fortunes of the Bufumbira plain for over a decade, were now in military control of the region, does not appear to have entered into the British assessment of Nyindo's motives.

With the advance of the Belgian forces into German Rwanda on 25 April 1916 and the route of the Germans south toward Tabora, Musinga faced the one European power universally feared in Central Africa as an army of occupation. He capitulated on 19 May.¹¹⁹

The position of Nyindo, who had actively campaigned with the Germans against the Anglo-Belgian forces in Bufumbira following his defection into German territory, was particularly unenviable. Not only had he openly harassed the communication lines and the collaborative chiefs in Bufumbira, but he had mounted a force of over 1200 to challenge the Kigezi post in October 1914 and had participated in the German attack on Chahifi in January 1915 and in the extraordinary attack by the rebel Ndochibiri with a force of 'over two thousand' on the Chahifi installation the following January.¹²⁰ Now, the Belgians, whom he had fled in 1914, controlled Rwanda proper. Facing certain arrest, he crossed into British territory to surrender on 27 May.¹²¹ It would be his final imperial calculation.

The vitality of the illusion of Rwanda dominance, although unquestionably dependent upon Nyindo's very special skills for its initial success, continued to dictate British policy in the post-war period. Despite an administrative record which permitted Bufumbira to be judged in 1920 to be 'by far the most progressive County in Kigezi',¹²² the reinstatement of the county chieftaincy following the war would be implemented on the most extraordinary terms: the reassertion of the Rwanda dynasty although the court had played no role in Bufumbira since the defection of Nyindo in

¹¹⁴ Entebbe Secretariat, 3543, Acting District Commissioner to Chief Secretary, 25 July 1914.

¹¹⁵ Anon., *Historique et Chronologie du Rwanda*, Astrida 1956, p. 154.

¹¹⁶ Mateke, 'Bufumbira', p. 45.

¹¹⁷ Provincial Monthly Report, Western Province, Sept. 1914.

¹¹⁸ Provincial Monthly Report, Western Province, Aug. 1914.

¹¹⁹ Louis, *Ruanda-Urundi*, p. 221.

¹²⁰ See Hopkins, 'Nyabingi', pp. 280-9, and H. B. Thomas, 'Kigezi Operations 1914-1917', in *Uganda*

Journal, 30 (1966), pp. 165-74, p. 167. The arms captured by Ndochibiri were not retained, despite their clear tactical advantage, but were sent to Nyindo to be forwarded to the Rwanda court. Des Forges, *Musinga*, p. 204.

¹²¹ Thomas, 'Kigezi Operations', p. 170. Nyindo was detained in northern Uganda until 1922. Released in January 1922 on the condition he 'never be allowed to return to any part of Kigezi', he was sent under escort to the Rwanda border. He died just ten miles from the border 'of heart failure'. Fort Portal, Provincial Archives, 232, Provincial Commissioner to District Commissioner, Kigezi, 29 May 1922.

1914. British retention of the Batutsi model is the more striking inasmuch as Protectorate officials faced in this instance no dilemma of hereditary leadership.

In November 1920, the District Commissioner presented his candidate for the chieftaincy. Nirimbilima had been selected by the Bishop Co-adjudicator of Rwanda as 'a man of exceptional merit and singularly devoid of the contempt for their [sic] more negroid and 'middle class' Bahutu'. The conditions of eligibility were not challenged: that the candidate be a Mututsi and that he be of the Rwanda royal family. As a marginal stipulation, it was also suggested that 'if possible, he [should also] be acquainted with Uganda fiscal and judicial methods and have a knowledge of Kiswahili'.¹²³ No attention appears to have been given to the extraordinary irregularity of recruiting an unknown Belgian subject to administer a British population on the advice of a Catholic Bishop stationed in Belgian territory.

Only in 1929, in the aftermath of highland unrest, would district-wide reforms secure the post of county chief in Bufumbira for a British subject. Even then, the convention of Batutsi dominance was so entrenched that the new cadre of local chiefs were regarded as a British innovation, devoid of any local legitimacy. Ironically, the first appointment of, chiefs from among the Bafumbira heralded a period of unprecedented abuse as hereditary clan chiefs, so essential to Batutsi legitimacy, were purged to accommodate the personal clients of the new appointees.¹²⁴ Although the Rwandan chief had represented Batutsi dominance and exploited the agricultural Bahutu, chiefly abuses in Bufumbira ironically developed only after the Rwanda chiefs had been removed.

In 1912, the introduction of the Uganda Protectorate structure on the local level had provoked an unprecedented collusion of court and clan to baffle British administrative interference. For the independent Bafumbira, it was a calculated risk, one which would not only serve them well in the colonial context but which provided, somewhat ironically, an unprecedented immunity for incursions by the Rwanda court. Shielded by a false ethnography which was largely a European invention, these alien Batutsi chiefs for seventeen years played upon the misconception to re-establish indigenous, politics and interests of the pre-colonial period which Belgian military intervention had first threatened to abolish in 1898.

¹²² Kigezi Correspondence, Provincial Commissioner to District Commissioner, 24 May 1920.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, District Commissioner to Provincial Commissioner, 6 Oct. 1920.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, District Commissioner to Provincial Commissioner, 5 July 1931. By 1931 corruption was so

pervasive in Bufumbira that disciplinary action was impossible. To avoid prosecuting the many chiefs implicated the District Commissioner ingeniously, if somewhat irregularly, 'decided to treat such shortcomings prior to 30th June as arising from "uvivu" (forgetfulness)'. *Ibid.*

Indigenization of European Colonialism in Africa: Processes in Yorubaland and Dahomey since 1860

A. I. ASIWAJU

I

Several recently published studies of European colonialism in Africa have emphasized the contribution of factors that were internal to the societies over which alien jurisdictions were imposed, in contrast to the stress which earlier evaluations placed on the Eurocentric perspective.¹ The former category of analyses, which this paper attempts to highlight, has ranged from the theoretical model of the type provided by Ronald Robinson in his highly illuminating essay on 'Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism'² to such empirical studies as are contained in the collaborative work entitled *West African Resistance*.³ A particularly fascinating discourse on the intricacies in the relationship between the rubrics of 'collaboration' and 'resistance' is Boniface Obichere's article 'The African Factor in the Establishment of French Authority in West Africa, 1880-1900'.⁴

But helpful and useful as these studies of the African perspective have been, they have been criticized quite justifiably as interpretations which generally tend to narrow African history to matters of reaction to the European presence. In West Africa, the argument about the indigenous context has been especially emphasized in Oloruntimehin's penetrating studies of the French case in the Western and Central Sudan.⁵ However, one work which always deserves particular mention is T. O. Ranger's case study on the Shona and Ndebele.⁶ This study has to be quoted and cited extensively because what it says about 'resistance' to British colonial establishment over the Shona is so easily generalizable for other parts of Africa.

Professor Ranger has argued quite incisively against seeing 'resistance' (including 'collaboration') exclusively as responses to European colonial phenomena.⁷ Focusing

¹ Such scholarly works include R. E. Robinson and J. Gallagher with A. Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism*, London 1961; J. D. Hargreaves, *Prelude to the Partition of Africa*, London 1963; and L. H. Gann and P. Duignan, *Burden of Empire: An Appraisal of Western Colonisation in Africa South of the Sahara*, London 1967.

² R. E. Robinson, 'Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration', in R. Owen and B. Sutcliffe (eds.), *Studies in Theory of Imperialism*, London 1972, pp. 117-42.

³ M. Crowder (ed.), *West African Resistance: The Military Response to Colonial Occupation*, London 1971.

⁴ B. Obichere, 'The African Factor in the Establish-

ment of French Authority in West Africa, 1880-1900', in P. Gifford and R. Louis (eds.), *France and Britain in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule*, New Haven 1971, pp. 443-90.

⁵ See B. O. Oloruntimehin, 'Resistance Movements in the Tukolor Empire', in *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 8 (1968), pp. 123-43; id., 'French Colonization and African Resistance in West Africa up to the First World War', in *Genève Afrique*, 12/1 (1973), pp. 5-18; id., 'Muhammad Lamine in French-Tukolor Relations, 1885-87', in *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 4/3 (1968), pp. 375-96.

⁶ T. O. Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia, 1896-7: A Study in African Resistance*, London 1967.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 346.

on the data on Southern Rhodesia (the present-day independent Republic of Zimbabwe), the essence of the argument is that the armed risings of the Shona against the authority of the British South African company in 1896-7 'must (in spite of any other alternative perspective) also be seen in the context of the African history of Southern Rhodesia as such'. They must be seen against the background of the existing patterns in inter- and intra-group relations—in this case, 'the relations between the Shona and the Ndebele, both before and after the rising, of the tensions operative within Ndebele and Shona societies themselves . . .'. 'And as the African history of Southern Rhodesia develops in the second half of the twentieth century,' Ranger further observed with prophetic insight, 'it may well be that one or other of these themes will emerge as more lasting than the theme of black-white relations itself.' 'it may be', he continued, 'that the rising will then be looked back upon as an important stage in the shifting balance of power between the Ndebele and the Shona; or as the source of significant changes within African society, rather than as a demonstration of African hostility to colonialism.'⁸ We are finally reminded that 'even if we concentrate on the risings as examples of resistance, we should not forget that resistance was offered in Southern Rhodesia to Africa regimes and to African invaders as well as to European ones'.

Professor Ranger's thesis—which stresses the need to view local 'resistance' against, or 'collaboration' with European colonialism in Africa as part of a much longer, wider, and more enduring African history—has been corroborated not only by Professor J. F. Ade Ajayi in his now famous reflections on the theme of 'Continuity of African Institutions under Colonialism'.⁹ It has also been re-echoed in studies such as the one by Allen Isaacman on *The Traditions of Resistance in Mozambique*.¹⁰ A special side attraction of these arguments is the fact that they facilitate as well as compel generalization on colonialism as one of what Philip Mason has correctly identified as 'Patterns of dominance', a phenomenon that man imposes at one level and repels at the other.¹¹

II

In the area of West Africa now covered by the southern half of the present-day People's Republic of Benin (formerly French Dahomey) and the geographically contiguous and historically interrelated Yoruba culture area which dominates the south-western parts of the area of the present-day Federal Republic of Nigeria, there is an abundance of data which provide valuable illustrations of the processes in the domestication of European imperial designs and subsequent colonial policies. In this area—which featured the Yoruba-speaking peoples and their closely related Aja neighbours in the west, the Borgu in the north, the Nupe in the north-east and the Edu in the east—there is no way that the history of these peoples' responses to the Anglo-French imperial

⁸ This clearly predicted the current Shona-Ndebele conflict under the cover of the personality clash between Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo as political opponents in Zimbabwe.

⁹ See J. F. Ade Ajayi, 'Continuity of African Institutions under Colonialism', in T. O. Ranger (ed.), *Emerging Themes in African History*, Nairobi 1968, pp. 189-200; and id., 'Colonialism: An Episode in

African History', in L. H. Gann and P. Duignan (eds.), *Colonialism in Africa, 1870-1960*, 5 vols., Cambridge 1969-75, vol. 1: *The History and Politics of Colonialism, 1870-1914*, Cambridge 1969, pp. 497-509.

¹⁰ A. Isaacman, *The Traditions of Resistance in Mozambique: Anti-Colonial Activity in the Zambezi Valley, 1850-1921*, London 1976.

¹¹ P. Mason, *Patterns of Dominance*, Oxford 1971.

rivalry of the 1860s and the 1880s and subsequent colonial and post-colonial administrations can be understood without a good insight into the centuries of pre-colonial history, culminating in the highly problematic political relations between and within groups and subgroups from the mid-eighteenth century to the last decade of the nineteenth.

The findings of my own research on the comparative impact of French and British imperialism and colonialism on Western Yoruba communities in the area in question may be added to those of more distinguished parallel studies of other Beninois and Nigerian localities.¹² Together, they serve as pointers to the way in which the perceptions of subject peoples significantly differed from the essential concerns of their colonial rulers even in situations, like those of Western Yoruba subgroups, where local interests initially coincided with European imperialist ambitions. Generally, European colonialism was accommodated or resented in accordance with the degree of coincidence or lack of it with long-established interests within and among local groups or subgroups. It has, for example, been argued that in this area, as elsewhere in Africa (as David Chanaïwa has ably demonstrated in his general essay on Southern Africa¹³), the existence of preceding indigenous forms of imperialism—such as those of Old Oyo and of the rival successor states of Dahomey, Ibadan, Ijaye, and Abeokuta—gave rise to preceding traditions of indigenous resistance movements. The resultant conflicts are known to have aided the process of European imperialist penetration.

Similarly, case studies of British Indirect Rule in Nigeria have demonstrated that while the white rulers thought of this colonial device as something they fashioned for their own purpose, the various indigenous African societies thought of it as something that could be adapted and reduced into workable local procedures to serve interests and alliances that both preceded and outlived formal colonial rule in the respective localities.¹⁴ In the particular case of the Yoruba, British Indirect Rule was a most welcome opportunity for specific groups and subgroups to improve their political status *vis-à-vis* their neighbours; it became a veritable instrument for the continuation of the pre-colonial struggles both to impose and resist domination. Since, in the context of the peoples' history and culture, a community whose head (*Obe*) wears the beaded crown (*ade*) is one with greater prestige than that of a competing community whose head (*a baale*) does not wear the crown, a movement began in the colonial period which has today led to the popularization of the Obaship institution. Of course, the claims and counter-claims were—and are still—tagged rightly or wrongly to historical traditions of the oldest possible ancestries.¹⁵

¹² For details see: A. I. Asiwaju, *Western Yorubaland under Colonial Rule, 1889–1945: A Comparative Analysis of French and British Colonialism*, London 1976; id., 'Migration as Revolt: The Example of the Ivory Coast and Upper Volta before 1945', in *Journal of African History*, 2 (1976), pp. 577–94. See also C. W. Newbury, *The Western Slave Coast and its Rulers: European Trade and Administration among the Yoruba and Adja-Speaking Peoples of South-Western Nigeria, Southern Dahomey and Togo*, Oxford 1961; R. Cornevin, *Histoire du Dahomey*, Paris 1960.

¹³ D. Chanaïwa, 'African Reaction and Resistance to European Colonization of Southern Africa, 1800–1914', in *Unesco General History of Africa*, 8 vols., London

1981–00, vol. 7 ed. by A. A. Boahen: *Africa under Colonial Domination, 1880–1935*, London 1985, pp. 194–220.

¹⁴ Longman of London in their Ibadan History series have published quite a number of such studies. These include A. E. Afigbo, *The Warrant Chiefs: Indirect Rule in South-Eastern Nigeria, 1891–1929*, London 1972; O. Ikime, *The Niger Delta Rivalry: Itsekiri-Urhobo Relations and the European Presence, 1884–1936*, London 1969; P. A. Igbafe, *Benin under British Administration: The Impact of Colonial Rule on an African Kingdom, 1897–1936*, London 1979; J. A. Atanda, *The New Oyo Empire: Indirect Rule and Change in Western Nigeria, 1894–1934*, London 1973.

¹⁵ For a larger study of the subject, see A. I. Asiwaju, 'Political Motivation and Oral Tradition in Africa: The

In such a context, the British Indirect Rulers could not be perceived in any other light than as servants, not masters, of the local communities and their leaders. A relevant study of the Ijesa (a principal Yoruba subgroup in the present-day Oyo State of Nigeria) by J. D. Y. Peel¹⁶ has indicated that, as far as the vast majority of the local people were concerned, any British District Officer administering the area in the heyday of Indirect Rule was but 'Oyinbo Owa'—that is, Owa's Whiteman, Owa being the customary reference to the traditional ruler. The attitude was no different in contemporary Oyo where, as J. A. Atanda's *New Oyo Empire* has amply demonstrated, British residents and District Officers were held in reverence by the local people as Alofin's 'friends'.¹⁷ In Western Yorubaland, where the pre-colonial rulers in most of the communities had the subordinate *baale* status without the customary right to wear the beaded crown, British Indirect rule was manipulated as an opportunity for such pre-colonial *baale* to assume the more prestigious title and office of *oba*.¹⁸

In most instances, such a development was viewed as the climax of the 'independence' movements which originated decades, if not centuries, before the colonial period. The reign lists of most Yoruba towns are presented as an unbroken continuum, with little or no regard for any distinction between the pre-colonial and the subsequent periods of history. If, as available comparative studies have shown, French colonial policies were generally more resented than the British, it was because such policies more consistently offended local sensitivities, ingrained both in the history and culture of the peoples concerned.¹⁹

The point to emphasize is that there is no way to comprehend the processes of both the imperialist penetration and subsequent colonial rule in Africa, including the area under discussion, without adequate reference to the totality of the history of the local people.

III

In the remainder of this paper, we will attempt a more concentrated discussion of the ways in which the 'African History' of Yorubaland and Dahomey influenced, even if it did not determine, processes and developments in the successive eras of European imperialist penetration and subsequent colonial rule. The aim is essentially a synthesis of stories that have already been told here and there, the simple objective being to underscore the resilience of what were and still are basically indigenous African concerns in a situation of admittedly tremendous European influence. The emphasis is on the theme of continuity as the undercurrent of change.

In the centennial seminar, devoted a 're-assessment of the proceedings and the impact of the Berlin West Africa Conference on the process of imperialist expansion

Case of Yoruba Beaded Crowns, 1900-1960', in *Africa*, 46 (1976), pp. 113-27.

¹⁶ J. D. Y. Peel, 'The Changing Family in Modern Ijesha History', a paper presented at the International Conference on the History of the African Family, School of Oriental and African Studies, London 1981.

¹⁷ Atanda, *New Oyo Empire*.

¹⁸ Asiwaju, *Western Yorubaland*, ch. 4.

¹⁹ Cf. the reactions of subject peoples to French colonial rule among the Yoruba and the borderland communities astride the Ghana-Ivory Coast and Ghana-Upper Volta boundaries as contained in the first two publications listed in n. 12 above.

and the Partition of Africa',²⁰ this paper aligned itself with the others intending to clarify the view from 'below'—that is the vision of communities at the receiving end of the expansionist activities of the European nation states and their colonial establishments in the African continent.

The area under discussion, stretching roughly from the Mona river, the present-day Benin–Togo international boundary, in the west to the Kukuruku Hills (hundreds of miles inside present-day Nigeria) in the east, presents an interesting variety of local reactions to the European imperialist penetrations of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The area is split roughly into two by the Weme river. The largely Aja western half featured a dramatic contrast between the 'collaboration' which the French enjoyed from the Gun of Porto Novo and the bloody 'resistance' offered by the Fon of Agbome (Abomey), leading to the French capture of the Dahomean capital (after a five-month military engagement) in November 1892 and the surrender of Gbehazin (Benhazin), their king, which the French could not achieve until January 1894.²¹

In Yorubaland, east of the Weme river valley, the range of the reactions included first and foremost the style adopted by the western subgroups such as the Ketu, the Sabe, the Ifonyin and the Ije, who welcomed the French (already based in Porto Novo and Cotonou) and assisted them in several vital ways to conquer Agbome. Similarly, there were their Awori, Anago, and Egbado neighbours, who expressly invited the British (established in Lagos since 1861) in a reasoned preference to the French. Either way—as has been noted elsewhere—the foreign regimes were initially embraced because they were seen as providing the most effective security against such hitherto hostile neighbours as Dahomey (based in Agbome) and the Egba at Abeokuta who had ravaged the area in the preceding six decades or so.²²

While the Western Yoruba, who had suffered as 'the wretched of the earth' under the yoke of Dahomean and Egba imperialism, collaborated with the Europeans, the Ijebu aristocracy offered battle to the British but were—like the Dahomeans *vis-à-vis* the French—ultimately defeated in 1892.²³ The Ijebu experience must be added to the earlier case of Lagos and the later instance of Oyo, both bombarded (the one in 1851 and the other in 1895), to complete the list of the episodes in the direct use of force for the establishment of British rule in Yorubaland. In Abeokuta and Ibadan, loss of sovereignty to the British was the ultimate experience in spite of some initial efforts to engage the Europeans in diplomatic manoeuvres. The Ekiti, the Igbomina, and most other subgroups in Eastern Yorubaland submitted to the British in consequence of Protectorate treaties. The latter were signed following the intervention of the Lagos Colonial Administration, preceded by the Christian Missionaries, to end the famous sixteen-year war 1877–93 which the *Ekitiparapo* (military confederacy of Eastern Yoruba states) had fought to liquidate Ibadan imperialism in their area.²⁴

²⁰ Professor Mommsen's main terms of reference for the symposium in Berlin, as contained in the invitation circular.

²¹ For a study of the French conquest of Dahomey, see D. Ross, 'Dahomey', in Crowder (ed.), *West African Resistance*, pp. 144–69 and the more detailed study: D. Ross, 'The Autonomous Kingdom of Dahomey, 1818–1894', Ph.D. Thesis, London 1967.

²² See Asiawaju, *Western Yorubaland*, ch. 2.

²³ There is an account in A. B. Aderibigbe, 'The Expansion of the Lagos Protectorate Frontier, 1868–1900', Ph.D. Thesis, London 1959.

²⁴ B. Awe, 'The Rise of Ibadan as a Yoruba Power, 1851–1893', Ph.D. Thesis, Oxford 1967. See also id., 'The Ajele System: A Study of Ibadan Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century', in *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 3/1 (1964), pp. 47–60, both items focus on Ibadan imperialism. For a study on *Ekitiparapo* as a

In all these events, the important question was not whether one community was a 'collaborator' or its next-door neighbour a 'resistor'. What was crucial was that the two different categories were little other than labels for essentially the same concerns. It is quite easy to show that for those who resisted, as well as for their counterparts who collaborated, the essential concern was for the survival and overall welfare of the particular communities. This point may be easily illustrated by reference to the concern of each and all for the question of sovereignty or political independence. In Yorubaland, for example, this factor showed up well, not only in such major states as Ijebu, Abeokuta, and Oyo, but also in Igbesa, a relatively less known Awori-Yoruba chiefdom north-west of Lagos. Igbesa leaders, while welcoming in 1888 a long sought-after British treaty of protection, nevertheless raised a preliminary objection to a clause in the draft which implied the people's acceptance of British sovereignty.²⁵ Whether the communities chose to 'collaborate' or 'resist', therefore, it is important to note that in Yorubaland and the Aja state of Dahomey, as elsewhere in Africa, the various communities perceived the Europeans as a factor which could be manipulated by leaders of particular African peoples to tackle problems that had deep roots in the pre-colonial and important ripple effects in the post-colonial phases of the local histories.

IV

The history of the Aja-Yoruba stretch of West Africa, Colin Newbury's 'Western Slave Coast',²⁶ is replete with suitable examples. We may, for convenience, highlight the data in respect of Lagos, Porto Novo, Dahomey, and Western Yorubaland—treated in much greater detail elsewhere, most especially in the first two chapters of *Western Yorubaland Under European Rule*.²⁷

If one may summarize the main submission for a start, it is that the pattern of European colonial settlement in this area in the late nineteenth century cannot be properly understood without an insight into historical antecedents that have to do basically with intricate relations within and between constituent groups and sub-groups, relations which date back to the time of the origin and growth of human settlements and societies in the area. The European colonial establishment was particularly facilitated by the acceleration of inter-group hostility which, while dominating the history of Yorubaland and Dahomey from c.1820 to c.1894, was already in evidence in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.²⁸

Perhaps the French would still have rivalled the British in the area; but no study of the actual historical process can validly leave out the influence of contemporary conflicts between rival indigenous groups and subgroups, especially at the level of some of the organized states. This led to a situation, such as actually emerged in the case of the

resistance movement against Ibadan imperialism in Eastern Yorubaland see S. A. Akintoye, *Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland, 1840-1893*, London 1971.

²⁵ A. I. Asiwaju, 'Western Provinces under Colonial Rule', in O. Ikime (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Ibadan 1980, pp. 429-45, p. 443.

²⁶ See Newbury, *Western Slave Coast*.

²⁷ See Asiwaju, *Western Yorubaland*; id., 'Western Provinces'; id., 'Yorubaland, Dahomey, Borgu and Benin in the Nineteenth Century', in J. F. Ade Ajayi (ed.), *Unesco General History of Africa*, vol. 6, forthcoming.

²⁸ For the pre-nineteenth century wars see I. A. Akinjogbin, *Dahomey and its Neighbours, 1708-1740*, Cambridge 1967.

Gun Kingdom of Porto Novo *vis-à-vis* the two neighbouring Western Yoruba states of Ipokia and Oke-Odan, where one African group's relationship with one particular set of Europeans virtually made it inevitable that the rival indigenous group would favour the other set of Europeans.²⁹

Finally, it is to the dynamic force of the local factor—featuring particularly the inalienable connections among local inhabitants, especially the activities of the hinterland *vis-à-vis* the coastal belts—that one must attribute the early outburst of Anglo-French colonial rivalry even to the extent of what has been aptly referred to as a 'miniature scramble'³⁰ and a proto-partition in 1863, two clear decades before the Berlin West Africa Conference. The enduring nature of the intra- and inter-group relations in the localities within the Mona-Niger region and beyond has continued to show up in the difficulties faced by both the colonial and post-colonial governments (operating on the model of European nation-states) in maintaining exclusive borders in the region—as in the rest of Africa characterized by a similar history of interlocking relations.³¹

The story of the British occupation of Lagos has been too frequently told to warrant any repetition here.³² Similarly well known is the African side of the history of both the slave trade and its abolition, which constituted important factors in the imposition of alien rule. We only need to be reminded that no account of this occupation can be complete without due reference to the intrinsically political motives behind the African wars that produced slaves for sale.³³ In Lagos, the establishment of British rule was remarkably facilitated by divisions within the local ruling élite. This was both the cause and effect of succession disputes which, for example, made Oba (King) Akitoeye and Dosumu (anglicized as 'Docemo'), his son and successor, disposed to the British, in contrast to the hostility of Kosoko, Akitoeye's predecessor in office, whom the British had to depose and banish in order to annex the kingdom to the British Crown in 1861.

In Lagos, then, one significant component of the context of African history relates to the politics of the traditional ruling élite. Accordingly, the advent of the British was probably not seen beyond its role as a factor in those politics which (needless to say) preceded, co-existed with, and outlived the operations of the 'Crown Colony'.³⁴ Also, while the factor of rival European presences, especially between the French and the British, was important, the expansion of the Lagos colonial frontier into the adjoining Yoruba hinterland was strongly influenced by the discovery, soon after the annexation, that without the vast Yoruba interior, Lagos was but 'a mere town upon a sandy island, insignificant in itself . . .'.³⁵ Not surprisingly, the most enduring effect of the British imperial expansion was the re-establishment, even if on a much larger scale, of long existing connections between the African coast and interior. Mechanized transportation merely replaced the traditional systems.

²⁹ Asiwaju, *Western Yorubaland*, pp. 43–4.

³⁰ Aderibigbe, 'Expansion', p. 13; Newbury, *Western Slave Coast*, p. 70.

³¹ For recent studies on African border relations see A. I. Asiwaju, *Artificial Boundaries*, Inaugural Lecture, University of Lagos, 12 Dec. 1984, forthcoming, and id. (ed.), *Partitioned Africans: Ethnic Relations across Africa's International Boundaries, 1884–1984*, London 1985.

³² As a typical study see J. F. Ade Ajayi, 'British

Occupation of Lagos: A Critical Review', in *Nigeria Magazine*, 69 (August 1961), pp. 96–106.

³³ The wars have been adequately covered in: J. F. Ade Ajayi and R. Smith, *The Nineteenth-Century Yoruba Warfare*, Cambridge 1964.

³⁴ This continuity is well emphasized in: P. D. Dole, *The Modern and Traditional Elite in Lagos*, Cambridge 1976.

³⁵ Aderibigbe, 'Expansion', p. 14.

Parallel considerations applied to the establishment of French rule over Porto Novo. Here, nothing better illustrates the thesis about European colonialism as something perceived locally as a mere element in indigenous African politics than the regular alternation of acceptance and rejection of the French by the rulers of the two principal rival royal families, who customarily exercised the right to present candidates to the throne of Porto Novo. It is, for example, on record that the protectorate which the French declared over Porto Novo in 1862 was directly induced by King Soji (Sodji in French documentation); the withdrawal of the protectorate in 1864 was to a large extent determined by the anti-French hostility of Mepon (Mekpon), who subsequently succeeded Soji (deceased soon after the 1862 treaty of protection) from a rival ruling family.

Tofa, who received back the French in 1862, was Soji's son. The outbreak of hostility between Porto Novo under Tofa and Dahomey under Glele and, later Gbehanzin in the 1880s was certainly influenced by the former's favourable disposition towards the French whom Dahomey resented because of their claims to Cotonou. But Porto Novo's pro-French disposition itself had to be understood against the background of the support which Gbehanzin was known to have given Sohingbe (a Porto Novian prince of the same ruling family as the late Mepon and opposed to that of Tofa), who had unsuccessfully disputed the succession with Tofa. The French conquest of Agbome in 1892 took place under the excuse that Porto Novo, having been redeclared a French Protectorate in 1882, had to be defended against the harassment of Dahomey. Obviously Porto Novo was in support because of its own interests.

The point to note in all this is that the interests of Porto Novo had to do, at least in part, with a dynastic struggle which dated far back into the history of the Gun Kingdom. As John Ballard's lucid account of the Porto Novo incidents of 1923 shows, this also remained a crucial factor in the politics of the area during and beyond the colonial era.³⁶ Sohingbe was one of the Porto Novian 'culprits' banished to Mauritania for the 1923 incidents; he died in exile. Louis Hunkanrin,³⁷ generally believed to be the 'father' of the anticolonial struggle in French Dahomey, was a sympathizer and Mauritanian fellow-prisoner.

French colonialism was manipulated by Porto Novo not only in the service of politics within the Gun Kingdom itself. In the eyes both of the ruling class in Porto Novo and Tofa, who reigned until his death in 1908, and those Western Yoruba states concerned, most especially Ipokia and Oke-Odan immediately to the east of Porto Novo, French imperialist interests in the area were also viewed as something placed at the disposal of Porto Novo to accomplish a pre-existing expansionist ambition of the Gun state.

At least, that was the light in which the French presence in Porto Novo in the 1880s and 1890s was seen by the leaders of the Anago (Yoruba) community of Ipokia and their counterparts among the allied Egbado of Oke-Odan. Both had suffered military attacks by Porto Novo, then allied with the Fon State of Dahomey, in 1848, 1881, and 1884. The well-known French expansionist endeavours in Western Yorubaland immediately east of Porto Novo—like similar efforts among the Gun kinship communities and chiefdoms in Badagry and environs south of the Western Yoruba states—were carried

³⁶ J. A. Ballard, 'The Porto Novo Incidents of 1923: Politics in the Colonial Era', in *Odu*, 2 (1965), pp. 52-75.

³⁷ J. L. G. Hazoume, J. Suret-Canale, M. Oke, G. da Silva, and A. I. Asiwaju, *La Vie et l'œuvre de Louis Hunkanrin*, Cotonou 1975.

out under the direct encouragement and even instigation of Porto Novo. Porto Novo arguments have always been that these areas were part and parcel of its traditional area of jurisdiction. The French endeavours failed because of the strength of the 'resistance' of the Yoruba and Aja states concerned, not against the French whom they did not know well enough, but against Porto Novo, whose imperialist designs had been known and experienced. The disposition of Ipokia and Oke-Odan towards the British in Lagos must be understood against this background of resentment against the French, perceived as political agents of Porto Novo.

A similar explanation applies to the pro-British attitudes in the Awori kingdom of Ado-Odo (a traditional friend of Porto Novo but not its political subordinate) and the Egbado kingdom of Ilaro. In these two cases, the pro-British disposition was further influenced by an awareness of the mutual resentment between the British colonial administration in Lagos and the Egba authorities at Abeokuta since the British annexation of Lagos in 1861. Ilaro and Ado had suffered at the hands of the Egba—the one a complete military defeat and subsequent imperial rule, and the other an attack in 1844 and subsequent protracted siege that was kept up until 1853. Alliance with the British was viewed in both cases as a means calculated to bring about not eventual loss of independence, but its preservation.

There is perhaps no better dramatization of the crucial role of the local factor in process of European imperialist establishment in the Aja-Yoruba region than the one in evidence in the French conquest of Dahomey. The weight ascribed by older texts to the superior arms and military organization of the French invading army has been reviewed in later research, which has accorded appropriate recognition to the critical importance of the support received from neighbouring peoples and states whom the Fon state had antagonized as a result of its draconian military policy.³⁸

As with the Chewa *vis-à-vis* their former Ngoni conquerors and imperialist rulers in East Africa during the British expedition against the latter in 1896, the Yoruba and the Mahin (an Aja subgroup north of Agbome) who had suffered excruciating defeats and enslavement at the hands of Dahomey, had no other way of perceiving the French invaders of Dahomey than as 'liberators'. Thus while (like the Chewa) the Yoruba and Mahin might say that the Europeans 'came to save us', the tune in Agbome (as with the Ngoni) was that 'they came to spoil our country'.³⁹ The point in this paper, of course, is that there is really no substantial difference in the real content of these two tunes, no matter how different they might sound to the ear. At the conclusion of the conquest, the policy of decentralization (or dissolution) in the administration of the area of the former Fon Kingdom, which the French adopted, again rested on the pre-existing pattern of division within the defunct state.⁴⁰

The degree of influence of the local factor in the establishment of European colonialism may be finally illustrated by reactions to both the intra- and inter-colonial boundary arrangements decided by the French and the British.⁴¹ Here, the most illustrative was the case of the intra-colonial boundary which the British administration in Nigeria decided between the bulk of their 'Egbado' subjects (mainly the Western

³⁸ Ross, 'Dahomey'.

³⁹ M. Read, 'Tradition and Prestige among the Ngoni', in *Africa*, 9 (1936), pp. 451-80, p. 470.

⁴⁰ C. W. Newbury, 'A Note on the Abomey Protectorate', in *Africa*, 29 (1959), pp. 146-55.

⁴¹ For details see Asiwaju, *Western Yorubaland*, pp. 58-65.

Yoruba groups that fell under their jurisdiction as a result of the Anglo-French inter-colonial boundary arrangement of 1889) and the Egba. The line of separation between the Egbado and Egba Local Government Areas of the present-day Ogun State of Nigeria, was satisfactory to all Western Yoruba subgroups so separated from the Egba, centred in Abeokuta, who for a long time continued to be remembered locally as former political enemies. Even today memories of the pre-colonial inter-group hostilities still have their impact on local politics, especially those of the relations between the Egba and the Egbado.⁴² Egbado communities situated on the Egba side of the border often thought of themselves as 'Egbados in chains'.

'If the intra-colonial Egba-Egbado boundary was seen as a liberating influence for Western Yoruba groups thereby cut off from the Egba, the Nigeria-Dahomey inter-colonial (international) boundary was perceived as such even more so by the groups who were accordingly severed from the domain which embraced the area of the former Fon Kingdom of Dahomey. While the Yoruba—such as the Ketu, the Sabe, the Ifonyin, the Ije, and the Anago—who (along with the Fon of Agbome) fell on the French side of the border were assured by their new European overlords of their liberation from the vanquished Dahomey, protests against the irritation of being identified as 'Dahomeyans' (the name of their nineteenth-century invaders) did not really cease until the politically induced change of name from 'Dahomey' to 'Benin' as recently as 1975.

The Sabe subgroup were the loudest of the protestors: in the opening years of the colonial era, they expressed their objection in different ways, including the officially resented removal of colonial boundary markers from the Opara to the Zou river, the latter rather than the former being considered the 'natural frontier' between the world of the Yoruba and that of the Aja, especially the highly antagonized Fon. Momodu, the Onisabe (king) of Sebe was, in fact, tried by the French for treason and banished to Porto Novo for ten years in 1904 in consequence of activities that were really more concerned with solidarity with the Yoruba in British Nigeria *vis-à-vis* Aja neighbours in Dahomey, than against the French as such.⁴³

V

The data on the Aja-Yoruba area of West Africa sketched out in this paper demonstrate the fact that 'imperialism' and 'colonialism' were no more than labels for a particular brand of politics, characterized by a concern for dominance. As dominance, colonialism must be understood as a category with great potential as a tool of analysis and generalization for areas wider than Africa under European colonial domination. European imperialism in Africa was preceded and strongly influenced by several indigenous brands. Similarly, 'resistance' and 'collaboration' will be meaningful only if we realize, as Professor Ranger has advised, that the terms are relevant as much to European as to African imperialism.

⁴² This fact has been amply demonstrated in A. I. Asiwaju, *Abeokuta, 1830-1980: From an Egba Refugee Camp to a Nigerian State Capital*, Abeokuta 1980 (this is the text of an invitational public lecture delivered at the Centenary

Hall, Abeokuta, on the occasion of the commemoration of 150 years of the Yoruba City).

⁴³ For an account of the Momodu affair see Asiwaju, *Western Yorubaland*, pp. 89 and 143.

These remarks, I believe, point to the value of comparisons in time and space and the generalizations they permit. The centennial seminar on the Berlin West Africa Conference of 1884-5 (held significantly in that now divided German city) would have robbed itself of an important opportunity if it had failed to bring to light the need to look at the subject of European imperialism, including partition politics, as a means to an improved understanding of the problem of domination and the challenges it has posed and continues to pose to man's welfare or even survival on this planet.⁴⁴

With particular reference to the Berlin West Africa Conference of 1884-5, the Aja-Yoruba experience is a demonstration of its limited, though important, role. The Conference did not start or end the process of European imperialist expansion. Yet it was not innocent: the general agreements reached by the delegates on territorial expansionist and colonial occupational principles, especially the imperative of 'effective occupation', rationalized the previous expansionist activities of European agents in Africa. They also dictated as well as accelerated the pace of future developments characterized by the creation of sharply defined colonial territories, built and administered on the model of the nation-states of Europe.

In all of these events, European activities were no more than external stimuli which African environments and situations tried to domesticate, assimilate, and absorb. There is really no better evidence of this than the eventual acceptance of the colonial structures, including the territorial frameworks and the state machines, as basic constituents of the post-colonial states in Africa. The difficulties in maintaining these structures, particularly the local reactions against the artificial boundaries of the nation-states in Africa, are understandably very similar to parallel reactions in Europe. However, in Africa, there is a very important sense in which the reactions against the nation-state can be counted as a continuation of the traditional responses to the original colonial impositions, conducted strictly in the light of local interests of enormous historical dimensions.

⁴⁴ For further details on African-European comparisons see Asiwaju, *Artificial Boundaries*, and id., 'The Human Face of Borders: A Comparison of the European with the African Historical Experience', paper at the 'International Symposium on the U.S./Mexican

Border and the Mexican-American Experience in Comparative Perspective', Joint School of Comparative American Studies, University of Warwick, Coventry, 5-6 May 1984. (Proceedings to be edited by Professor A. Hennessy, Director of the School).

Nigerian Reaction to the Imposition of British Colonial Rule, 1885-1918

OBARO IKIME

1. INTRODUCTION

The subject of the British occupation of Nigeria and the reaction of the Nigerian peoples to that occupation has received the detailed attention of quite a number of scholars.¹ In the discussion which follows, no attempt will be made to recapitulate in detail the views and arguments of all these scholars, however desirable such an approach may be. Instead, advantage is taken of the fact that the broad framework of my subject is already well known, and attention is focused, therefore, only on a number of issues which are regarded as deserving restatement or emphasis. Similarly, the motives for the European scramble for and partition of Africa are not discussed here, since this aspect is dealt with by other papers in this collection.

The dates chosen have a definite significance. Although, as shall be demonstrated, relations between the Nigerian peoples and Britain in the age of the scramble and partition were influenced by developments of the pre-1884 period, there can be little doubt that from 1885 onwards Britain's attitude to what became Nigeria changed radically. The treaty-making activities of Consul Hewett in 1884 were clearly the result of Britain's determination to provide herself with the legal trappings that could enable her to lay claim to the Oil Rivers as a British sphere of influence in the purely European bargaining that the Berlin Conference of 1884-5 represented. Britain's success at the Berlin Conference in laying claim to different parts of what became Nigeria gave her, from the viewpoint of Europe, the right to establish effective occupation, a doctrine formulated at the Berlin Conference. This was clearly the result of peculiar circumstances to do with Britain's desire to control the trade of Lagos in the years immediately following her suppression of the overseas slave trade. For the larger Nigerian area, the main imperial thrust began in 1885 with the declaration of a British protectorate over the Oil Rivers, which Britain duly announced to the rest of Europe in keeping with the rules of the game as agreed in Berlin. The next year Britain took a hand in bringing the Yoruba wars of the nineteenth century to an end through the peace treaty of 1886, the terms of which, as I have argued elsewhere,² furnished the British with all the excuse they needed for increased intervention in the affairs of

¹ J. C. Anene, *Southern Nigeria in Transition*, Cambridge 1966; J. E. Flint, *Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria*, Oxford 1960; E. A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914*, London 1966; O. Ikime, *Merchant Prince of the Niger Delta*, London 1968; id., *Niger Delta Rivalry*, London 1969; id., *The Fall of Nigeria*,

London 1977; K. K. Nair, *Politics and Society in South-Eastern Nigeria*, London 1972; A. J. Latham, *Old Calabar 1600-1891*, Oxford 1972; R. A. Adeyeye, *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria*, London 1971. This is only a selection.

² Ikime, *Fall of Nigeria*, p. 54.

Yorubaland. From that time on, the catalogue of Anglo-Nigerian confrontation built up rapidly: Opobo 1887, Ijebu 1892, Itsekiriland 1894, Brass 1895, Oyo 1895, Benin 1897, the Aro 1901, the Sokoto Caliphate 1900-3, the hinterland of the western and eastern delta 1900-18. The imperial push from 1885 onwards is thus unmistakable, and it is submitted that this push was largely the result of the Berlin Conference of 1884-5.

This new imperial push which began in 1885 was not fully complete before the outbreak of the 1914-18 war. By 1914 many parts of Nigeria had come under some measure of British rule. The degree of effectiveness of this alien rule varied from place to place. Nowhere, however, could it be said that as of that date the British were already definitively in the saddle, that the Nigerian peoples had become duly reconciled to the new situation. The outbreak of World War I, providing as it did a major distraction for the new imperial rulers, gave some of the Nigerian groups an opportunity for seeking to throw off the imperial yoke. This attempt, which failed, can be said to represent the last of the resistance movements against the early phase of British colonial rule in Nigeria. Hence the choice of 1918 as our terminal date.

Although it has been stated that from 1885 onwards there was definitely a new imperial thrust, the approach taken by this paper is that a proper understanding of the process of the British occupation of Nigeria demands a knowledge of events in the earlier period, especially events in the period 1800-84. This is the justification for the discussion of the prelude to colonial conquest which immediately follows.

2. PRELUDE TO COLONIAL CONQUEST

The nature of the British occupation of Nigeria was determined to a large extent by the relations which had existed between European traders, naval officers, Christian missionaries, and the various African states and peoples in the period 1800-c.1884. Admittedly, European traders had been operating along the coast of what became Nigeria since the late fifteenth century. However, Afro-European relations in the period up to 1800 were vastly different from those that developed in the nineteenth century. In the earlier period, Europeans trading along the coast of the Nigerian geographical area were completely dependent on the indigenous rulers not only for ensuring that trade did flow, but also for the safety of their lives and property. Unlike the situation in the Gold Coast where some European nations built and maintained forts along the coast and thus had a military presence, none of the European trading nations operating in Nigeria had any military installations. Relations with Nigerian coastal rulers and people were clearly influenced by this knowledge. Mutual interdependence and respect were thus a feature of Afro-European relations in this period.

This situation altered radically in the nineteenth century. British determination to stamp out the overseas slave trade brought into Nigerian territorial waters gunboats of the anti-slave trade squadron and thereby altered the balance of military power between coastal rulers and European traders who could now call on the gunboats to support them against hard-bargaining, perceptive coastal rulers who controlled the trade of their subjects. The same preoccupation with the suppression of the slave trade led to the signing of anti-slave trade treaties with a number of the coastal states. The

signing of treaties introduced a new relationship with the coastal rulers. On the one hand, as was clearly exemplified in Bonny, the difference in thinking between the naval officers who signed the treaties and the British Foreign Office sometimes led to the non-fulfilment of the terms of the treaty by Britain. Whereas such non-fulfilment of terms by Britain passed without any sanctions being imposed on the offending party, any alleged infringement on the part of the coastal rulers called forth fiery judgement, emphasizing the growing imbalance in relations between Africans and Europeans in this region. The consequence was a worsening of relations, again best typified by those between Bonny and Britain in the years up to the Bonny civil war.³

Missionary activity also played its part in influencing Afro-European relations in the nineteenth century. The point has been convincingly made that the reaction of the Nigerian peoples and groups to Christian missionary activities was determined much more by the pressing demands of contemporary commerce and politics than any concern with the spiritual values of the Christian faith.⁴ The varying attitudes of different groups became an instrument in the hands of missionaries, European traders, and consular officials. In Calabar, competing commercial interests led to a situation in which Duke Town and Creek Town vied for missionary favours. This resulted in division within Calabar society and so weakened Efik reaction to increasing European pressure as the nineteenth century wore on. It also led to a situation in which the missionaries successfully condemned important aspects of the Efik social system. In Yorubaland, the favourable response of Abeokuta to missionary activity, for reasons dictated by the Yoruba power politics of the time, created a situation in which Abeokuta was used as an ally by the British against Lagos as the case for the bombardment of the latter was made to the Foreign Office in 1851. Then there was the fact that the campaign against the slave trade, of which missionary activity formed a part, created the class of 'liberated Africans', the new African élite, who genuinely believed that the extension of British rule into what became Nigeria was a blessing that was to be sought. Admittedly, the attitude of this élite was to change as a result of the doctrine of white racial superiority which manifested itself among missionaries in what J. E. Flint has described as 'a nasty and debasing struggle along racial lines between black and white clergy'.⁵ While it lasted, however, the attitude of the élite helped to promote British influence in parts of Southern Nigeria.

By far the most important determinant of Afro-European relations in the years just before the new imperialism of the 1880s was the trade in palm produce and other sylvian products. This was markedly so in the Oil Rivers, what eventually became known as the Niger Coast Protectorate from 1893 onwards. Considerations of space make it impossible to dwell on the details of these relations here. I can do no more than refer the reader to the works of the fairly large number of scholars who have worked on different aspects of this subject.⁶ For the purpose of this paper it is enough to identify

³ K. O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta*, Oxford 1956, chs. 9 and 10; S. J. S. Cooke, *King Jaja of the Niger Delta: His Life and Times*, New York 1974, chs. 2 and 3.

⁴ See J. F. Ade Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891*, London 1965 and Ayandele, *Missionary Impact*.

⁵ J. E. Flint, 'Nigeria: The Colonial Experience from 1800-1914', in L. H. Gann and P. Duignan (eds.), *Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960*, 5 vols., Cambridge 1969-75, vol. 1: *The History and Politics of Colonialism, 1870-1914*, Cambridge 1969, pp. 220-60, here p. 220.

⁶ See e.g. E. J. Alagoa, *The Small Brace City State*, Ibadan and Madison 1964 and Ikime, *Merchant Prince*.

and discuss the main issues as these relate to the eventual confrontation between Britain and the various Nigerian groups.

There were two sides to these relations—Afro-European (increasingly Afro-British) and intra-African. Let us take Afro-European relations first. The trade in palm produce led to the building of permanent structures *on land* by the various European traders. Permanent structures meant that European agents of various firms had to live in the coastal states for prolonged periods, collecting small quantities of palm produce until sufficient was available for a shipment to Europe. How were relations between these European supercargoes as they were called and the coastal rulers and people to be ordered and controlled? Who had the overall authority?

As is well known, the trade in palm produce was run on a trust system. The main features of this system are now too well known to require recapitulation. The trust system, and its name implies, presumed good faith on the part of all concerned—European firms who put their trust in the coastal middlemen traders, the coastal middlemen traders who agreed to supply an arranged quantity of palm produce to offset the trust given, the hinterland producers to whom coastal traders in turn gave trust as an incentive to produce and supply agreed quantities of oil. What happened when the agreements that formed the bedrock of this system could not be kept for whatever reason? Whose responsibility was it to sort out the mess that such a situation inevitably created?

Then there was the question of acceptable prices. Then, as now, the balance of advantage was with the European firms: they fixed the prices Africans paid for the manufactured goods sold to them; they fixed the price they paid for palm and other African produce. Whatever may be said in explanation or defence of this situation, it is also part of the logic of that situation that there would be times when coastal middlemen traders refused to accept the price offered for their produce by European firms. When that happened, how was the stalemate resolved?

Both sides were naturally anxious to see trade flourish. For this reason they reached a number of agreements. From 1851 onwards trade agreements were signed between the British consul and various coastal rulers, laying down conditions which would govern the trade of the given area. Anyone who has read these agreements will be aware that they were one-sided in the extreme, in so far as they provided for punishment to be meted out to coastal rulers and traders who failed to observe the provisions of these trade agreements. Referring to a trade treaty with Bonny in 1836, Dike wrote: 'the treaty of 1836 signalized naval power as the new and disintegrating [also decisive] factor in Delta Society'. That each of the agreements was signed on board a British man-of-war provides a ready explanation for why the African coastal rulers went along with such one-sided agreements: the imbalance of fire power was already beginning to tell; the ability of the coastal rulers to insist that the affairs of their states should be ordered in accordance with their interests and wishes was already beginning to be undermined.⁷

Agreements or no agreements, disputes did arise from the trading relations between the coastal rulers and Europeans. The main causes were outstanding debts and overpricing. Bonny and the Itsekiri kingdom provide the best examples in this regard.⁸ In

⁷ See Dike, *Trade and Politics* and Ikime, *Merchant Prince*.

⁸ Dike, *Trade and Politics*, p. 72.

1844 King Pepple went to war against the European supercargoes. In this instance the king worsted his enemies—but only because the naval authorities refused to intervene in favour of the British traders. In Itsekiriland Beecroft chastised the people of Bobi 'with powder and shot' in 1851 over a quarrel with the firm of Horsfall. In 1862 another dispute between Ikebuwa, an Itsekiri trader, and a Mr Henry, a white supercargo owner, resulted in Consul Freeman steaming into the Benin River and imposing fines on Ikebuwa as well as the Itsekiri leaders, despite his acceptance that Henry was also at fault. He wrote:

Notwithstanding the circumstances which led to the attack on Mr Henry's factory in which I consider him so much to blame as to have deprived himself of any right to claim compensation, still such an outrage would not be allowed to pass unnoticed or unpunished by Her Majesty's Government.⁹

The Foreign Office did not censure the consul or reverse his decision. Similar incidents occurred elsewhere. The phase of 'new imperialism' had not yet come, but the problems of the palm oil trade were forcing British agents to act in a manner which clearly indicated their acceptance of the dictum, 'might is right' in Afro-European relations. My contention is that situations like this were important ingredients in determining African attitudes to the imperial push when it began in the 1880s.

Conflicts and wars were no more than the more dramatic manifestations of the efforts to find solutions to disputes arising from trade between Europeans and coastal traders. Peaceful solutions were also sought. One of these led to the establishment of Courts of Equity—mixed courts of European supercargoes and leading coastal traders set up to iron out disputes between the two groups. Despite the word 'Equity', the working of these courts was rarely equitable. In Calabar, half the members of the court were Efik and half European. However, whereas all the European members had the vote, only the rulers of Creek Town and Duke Town were given the vote. In addition, the president of the court was always a European—and he always had two votes.¹⁰ Clearly the odds were heavily in the Europeans' favour. So although in their these Courts of Equity were set up to find peaceful solutions to Afro-European disputes, they nevertheless had the effect of fortifying the European position in the coastal states. That this was possible can be explained in terms of the continued presence in Nigeria's territorial waters of British gunboats which the consuls used to terrorize the rulers of the coastal states. Finally in this connection, the point needs to be stressed that in normal circumstances there would have been no need for any Court of Equity. A sovereign state must have the right to lay down the law governing trade within its territory. A mixed court of the type represented by the Courts of Equity was, in the context of the times, a derogation of an important ingredient of the sovereignty of the delta states. Hence my argument that in many parts of Southern Nigeria important aspects of the sovereignty of our peoples had been undermined before the great imperial push between the late 1880s and the early years of this century. The new imperialism may have finally toppled the sovereignty of the Nigerian peoples, but the ground was prepared in the eighty years before the final push.

If we may now turn to the intra-African aspects of the trade in palm produce, the crucial point to make is that the acute competition which the trade engendered led to

⁹ Ikime, *Merchant Prince*, p. 22.

¹⁰ Nair, *Politics and Society*, p. 127.

intra-state divisions and rivalries and inter-state conflicts and wars. In Calabar the main contestants were Creek Town and Duke Town but even within each of these towns, inter-lineage rivalries were a noticeable feature of Efik nineteenth-century history. In Bonny the fortunes of George Pepple were determined partly by rivalries between his House and other Houses; the civil war which led to the foundation of Opobo by Ja Ja was the culmination of these inter-house rivalries and conflicts. The deposition and exile of Pepple by the British took place following his decision to go to war against Kalabari, a rival trading state. In Itsekiriland competition between various groups featured prominently in the nineteenth century, which saw more intra-Itsekiri wars than in their previous history. The significance of these divisions and rivalries for our purpose was that the European traders as well as British consular authorities were able to exploit them in their bid to secure a commanding position in the trade and politics of the delta states. Weaker groups were glad to ally themselves with the British against stronger groups. That the end result was a loss of sovereignty for both themselves and their opponents and rivals was an eventuality they did not then foresee. This alliance was an important factor in the nature of British conquest and the reaction thereto of the various Nigerian peoples and groups.

In Yorubaland Afro-British relations were largely determined by the requirements of the various Yoruba Kingdoms in a century of inter-group wars. In Lagos the British exploited inter-lineage differences to secure eventual occupation by 1861. Thereafter it was the need to exploit the commercial resources of the rich Lagos hinterland that determined the policies of the British authorities in Lagos. Whereas trade was flourishing in the Oil Rivers, the trade of Lagos was limited by the wars of the hinterland. It became a major aspect of British policy to bring those wars to an end. The stalemate between Ibadan and the Ekiti Parapo in the sixteen years war gave the British, acting through black CMS missionaries, an opportunity to help negotiate peace. As I have argued elsewhere, it was important that if the Yoruba wars were to come to a meaningful end, the party that intervened to bring this about must also have the physical force to guarantee the negotiated peace.¹¹ The British in Lagos fitted the bill admirably. The 1886 peace treaty contained provisions which the British were to exploit to spread their influence into Yorubaland. Apart from agreeing to withdraw to their various territories as stipulated in the treaty, the combatants also agreed to 'submit themselves to such directions as may seem necessary or expedient to the Governor of Lagos for better or more effectually securing the object of this Treaty',¹² that is peace. Also any issues which might arise between the combatants which were not covered by the terms of the treaty were to be referred to the Governor of Lagos for settlement. Clearly, only war-weariness would have made the Yoruba agree to such terms. And it was continuing war-weariness and the preoccupation with recovery after the ravages of war that made British occupation of Yorubaland in the years after 1886 comparatively easy and peaceful.¹³

In what was to become Northern Nigeria, the first half of the nineteenth century saw little European activity that in any way challenged the authority of the Nigerian peoples in that region. However, the various journeys by European travellers

¹¹ Ikime, *Fall of Nigeria*, p. 54.

¹² S. A. Akintoye, *Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland, 1840-1893*, London 1971, Appendix II.

¹³ E. A. Ayandele, 'The Mode of British Expansion in Yorubaland in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century', in *Odu*, 3, 2 (1967), pp. 22-43.

interested in tracing the source and direction of flow of the Niger were to result in a changed situation in the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1867 a British consulate was established in Lokoja. Its closure in 1869 may have represented a change in official thinking in Britain, it did not represent a waning of interest in the commerce of the region along the Niger-Benue waterway. Indeed from the 1860s a number of European firms established trading relations with the riverine emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate. Of these, the West African Company Ltd., the Company of Merchants Trading to the Upper Niger, Holland Jacques and Co., and Miller Brothers were the leading British firms. There were other minor ones. Cut-throat competition among these firms led to a fall in profits which in turn provided the background to Taubman Goldie's amalgamation of British trading interests into the National African Company in 1879. By the time of this amalgamation, the French had also established trading posts at Gbebe, Lokoja, Egga, Shonga, Raba, and Demsa. In 1880 Germany entered into the picture with Flegel's mission to Sokoto and his hoisting of the German flag on the Benue in 1881.¹⁴ In the period up to 1885 increased European commercial activity along the Niger-Benue did not necessarily challenge the political authority of the Nigerian rulers in these parts. Indeed some of the rulers used the European firms as allies in their wars against their enemies, and the presence of French, British, and (for a short time only) German trading concerns made it possible for these rulers to play one firm against another, one nation against another. The peoples and rulers of 'Northern Nigeria' thus had no real reason to worry about the European presence in their territory. There had been no major conflicts between them and the European merchants, British consular authority had not spread to this area; British gunboats had not meted their fiery justice against any of them. Indeed for these peoples and rulers such was their experience even in the period 1885-99 that the proclamation by Frederick Lugard of a British Protectorate over them in 1900 must have appeared like one huge joke, as indeed their reactions clearly indicated until the maxim guns began to speak.

3. BRITISH CONQUEST AND NIGERIAN REACTION

For Nigeria the period of the 'new imperialism' can be said to have begun in late 1884 with the signing of 'protection' treaties between Britain and the coastal states. The granting of a royal charter to the National African Company in 1886 may have represented an unwillingness on the part of Britain to assume official responsibility for governing the area in which the company operated; it most certainly was a deliberate act to guarantee British interests in the Niger-Benue as well as parts of the Niger delta in keeping with the doctrine of effective occupation. To that extent it was part of the manifestation of the new imperialism, for both the signing of protectorate treaties and the granting of powers of governance to a trading company were prompted by the activities of other European powers, notably France and Germany, in the age of the scramble for Africa. The declaration by Britain of a protectorate over the 'Oil Rivers' in 1885 was proof that the scramble was on.

¹⁴ See Flint, *Sir George Goldie*, and Adeleye, *Power and Diplomacy*.

It is impossible and perhaps unnecessary to go over the arguments which deal with the nature, validity, and role of treaties in the whole process of the British conquest of Nigeria. It is enough to draw attention to the problem of translating European notions such as 'protectorate' into the various Nigerian languages; to the possibility of forging treaties, especially in relations between the National African Company and the Sokoto Caliphate; to the role which a show of force, represented by a man-of-war, played in getting Nigerian rulers to sign treaties which contained objectionable terms. However, when all this had been said, it must also be added that most of those who put their 'marks' to these treaties were traders of considerable experience with a certain understanding of European intentions especially in matters of commerce. The delta traders knew enough of their middlemen role to refuse to accept any free trade clause in treaties with the British, as exemplified by the Itsekiri and Opobo treaties.¹⁵ In Brass, suspicion of British intentions resulted in the protection treaty being signed for only six months.¹⁶ Then there was the classic case of Ja Ja of Opobo demanding that the expression 'protectorate' be explained in detail. In other words, the evidence is that although the delta merchant-princes may not have understood every clause of the protection treaties, they were particularly sensitive about those touching on trade. Indeed it can be argued that many of these ruler-traders were prepared to sign the treaties, provided there was a guarantee of continued trade under reasonable terms. The existing literature makes it quite clear that in the years after 1885, the major conflicts which arose between Britain and various Nigerian peoples had to do with trade. In every single case—Opobo, Ijebu, Itsekiriland, Brass, Benin—the conflicts arose over attempts by Britain to modify unilaterally the conditions which governed trade between her and the Nigerian peoples concerned, clear evidence that while the treaties were regarded as important in the purely intra-European bargaining of the age of the scramble, they were hardly regarded by the European powers as the instruments that were to determine Afro-European relations. And yet the official European records constantly speak of African rulers breaking treaty terms. The fact of the matter is that in the age of the scramble as in the immediately preceding phase of Afro-European relations might (actual as well as potential) was right.

Because it was the delta region with which Europeans first made contact, it was in that same region that the saga of Anglo-Nigerian confrontation was first enacted in the years between 1885 and 1900. The details of this confrontation are so well known now that it is not intended to go over them. In 1887 Ja Ja of Opobo was, in one of Britain's most perfidious acts in West Africa, deported. This deportation was not, as Harry Johnston would have us believe, because Ja Ja was obstructing trade or terrorizing the hinterland palm oil producers. Ja Ja was deported because he dared to stand by his treaty right, to insist that the trading arrangements as agreed between him and the British, which guaranteed his hinterland markets, be maintained. He was deported because as a merchant-prince he was perceptive and able enough to hold his own against the European traders.¹⁷

After Ja Ja it was Nana of Ebrohimi in 1894. In many ways Nana was the Ja Ja of the western delta. Nana's major offence was that his power had to be broken in the hope of greater profits for European traders—the same as was the case with Ja Ja.

¹⁵ Anene, *Southern Nigeria and Ikime, Merchant Prince*.

¹⁶ Alagoa, *Small Brace City State*.

¹⁷ Cookey, *King Jaja*.

There were, however, certain differences. Ja Ja was the undisputed ruler of Opobo, a new state founded by him. Nana was only one, albeit the most successful, or Itsekiriland's leading traders. Because trade and politics went hand in hand in these trading states of the delta, competition in trade was reproduced in politics. The outcome was a number of rival groups in Itsekiriland. Thus Nana had his rivals, the most unyielding of whom, in the period of aggressive British imperialism, were led by Dogho Numa. In the British Dogho found most worthy allies, and as I have shown in my detailed study of Nana, Dogho played a notable role in bringing about the collapse of Nana's defence of his town and his position against the British onslaught. But not even under Dogho's influence can anyone who has read the details of the British war against Nana fail to see that the latter was a most worthy and determined adversary. Like Ja Ja, Nana, after an illegal trial, was deported to the then Gold Coast.¹⁸

After Nana came the Ijo of Brass. E. J. Alagoa's detailed study of the affairs of this small, brave city state provides the background to the Akassa war of 1895. Forced out of their markets by the Royal Niger Company and reduced to near starvation as a consequence, the people of Brass cried out to the British government to intervene between them and the company. Even Claude Macdonald, British Consul-General at the time, confirmed the iniquitous conditions imposed on the Brass people by the Niger Company. Yet the British government did nothing. In desperation the Brass people attacked and sacked the company's headquarters in Akassa. Now British 'justice' demanded that this 'outrage' be avenged. So the consular authority which had been powerless against the Niger Company mounted a punitive expedition against Brass and, after severe fighting, brought this state to its knees.¹⁹

Two years later Benin fell. P. A. Igbafe's work leaves no room for doubt as to why the British sought to impose their control over Benin—to tap that kingdom's rich forest resources. Phillips' ill-fated attempt to visit the Oba of Benin against all advice could be explained in no other way. The Itsekiri on the coast may have complained about the measures adopted by the Benin ruler to control trade in his territory. There can be no questioning the Oba's right to lay down the law governing trade in his domain. At any rate, it was not Itsekiri but British trading interest that was the determining factor. When the Oba reacted to Phillip's unwelcome entry into his territory by sending his fighting men against him, the 'Benin Massacre' ensued, the justification for the greater massacre and spoliation now known as the Benin Expedition of 1879. At the end of this expedition Benin passed under British rule.²⁰

The sack of Benin by the British was the first major step from the coastal belt into the hinterland. In the western delta area, the years between 1900 and about 1914 saw the British move gradually into the Urhobo, Isoko, and Ukwuani hinterland. No major wars were fought in this process, though many small 'patrols' were mounted against groups in the hinterland, in a region of small-scale socio-political units. A remarkable feature of this push was the use made of Itsekiri men as guides, interpreters, messengers, and in some cases political agents.²¹ A similar process emerged in the eastern delta hinterland, but here the British mounted a major offensive against the

¹⁸ See details of the trial in Ikime, *Merchant Prince*.

London 1979.

¹⁹ Alagoa, *Small Brave City State*.

²¹ Ikime, *Niger Delta Rivalry*, ch. 4.

²⁰ P. A. Igbafe, *Benin Under British Administration*,

Aro. The Aro had become the leading middlemen traders of the Igbo hinterland in the nineteenth century. Commercial predominance was mistaken for political hegemony, and the British thought that the conquest of the Aro would mean the conquest of Igboland. The Aro for their part used all their guile as well as their famed oracle to seek to counter the British pressure. In a way, the final confrontation between the two was something of an anticlimax, given the detailed war preparations of the British. But the fall of the Aro did not result in the fall of Igboland.²² The British had to deal with many more Igbo groups in the period right up to the First World War. In these cases Ijo and Efik men from the coastal states played the same role as the Itsekiri did in the Urhobo hinterland.

Meanwhile, from the 1890s onwards, Yorubaland was also falling to the British. After the peace of 1886 most of Yorubaland was too weary to oppose the British. But Ijebu did in 1892. The British expedition against Ijebu, like that against all the other groups already discussed, was a result of British determination to force their trading terms on the various Nigerian peoples. Ijebu refused to be dictated to by the British. Geographically well placed to serve as the middlemen in the trade between Lagos and the Yoruba hinterland, the Ijebu refused to throw open their territory for free trade. They were therefore militarily subjugated. And if Ibadan war boys fought with the British against the Ijebu, it was not so much a welcoming of the British as a continuation of previous Ibadan-Ijebu hostility arising from Ibadan's desire to trade directly with Lagos. The fall of Ijebu to the British in 1892 convinced most of the other Yoruba groups of the futility of armed resistance. And although British rule over the rest of Yorubaland was not established without some use of force, there were no more major military confrontations.

In 1900 the British declared a protectorate over 'Northern Nigeria'. This protectorate was understood by the British to represent the area over which the Royal Niger Company, which lost its charter in 1899, had exercised control. The works of Flint and Adeleye make it clear, however, that the RNC's claim to political dominion over this area was bogus.²³ But it suited the British government's purpose in the period of the scramble. It was one thing to declare a protectorate, quite another to establish control over it. The component parts of the Sokoto Caliphate refused to accept British rule and were conquered one after the other in the period 1900-3. The non-Caliphate parts of 'Northern Nigeria' also refused to give up their sovereignty and many groups in what was to be known as the Middle Belt fought against the British off and on from 1900 to the period of the 1914-18 war.²⁴

4. THE EARLY PHASE OF BRITISH ADMINISTRATION AND NIGERIAN REACTION THERETO

It may have become clear from the presentation thus far that although a major shift had taken place in the British attitude to the peoples of Nigeria in the period 1885-1900, the

²² Anene, *Southern Nigeria*. Also A. E. Afigbo, 'The Aro Expedition of 1901-1902: An Episode in the British Occupation of Iboland', in *Odu*, NS 7 (1972), pp. 3-27.

²³ Flint, *Sir George Goldie* and Adeleye, *Power and*

Diplomacy.

²⁴ For Caliphate resistance see Adeleye, *Power and Diplomacy*; Ikime, *Fall of Nigeria*. For aspects of non-Caliphate resistance see J. O. Agi, 'British Adminis-

reaction of the Nigerian peoples continued to be determined by their respective interests, based on their understanding of relations between them and the Europeans in the pre-1885 period. A careful reading of the primary material concerned with relations between various Nigerian groups and the British would confirm this observation. Thus the Ja Ja-British and Nana-British correspondence reveals quite clearly that both Ja Ja and Nana believed the British could be expected to see reason based on existing agreements and *modus operandi*. The same can be said of the Oba of Benin, the Ijebu, and the Sokoto Caliphate. All of these leaders and groups failed to realize the degree of change in Afro-European relations that the 'new imperialism' represented, and so continued to engage in futile arguments about what they saw as their rights. In a similar manner, the reaction of various Nigerian peoples to the beginnings of actual British colonial administration was determined by their perception of their interests or their understanding of what change had taken place.

Outside Lagos, effective British rule began to be established from 1891 onwards, with the appointment of Major Claude Macdonald as Consul-General. While the Consul and his staff took decisions at central government level, native courts or native councils were set up by the British to perform the usual functions of local government. In order to make administration more manageable, the area of the Niger Coast Protectorate (as of the other units that were to be amalgamated as Nigeria in 1914) was broken into administrative units called by various names. The headquarters of these units became new centres of importance, so much so that in some instances groups pleaded that British vice-consulates be established among them. Thus Okrika craved for such an establishment as part of her ongoing competition with Bonny, the headquarters of one of these new units.²⁵ Also, centres where native courts were established became new centres of importance and, although these centres were quite often haphazardly chosen, those among whom they were sited regarded themselves as having new significance. The point must be stressed here that what was happening was that the various groups were adjusting to an as yet vague reality and seeking to make the best of a situation they did not yet fully comprehend, let alone accept. This attitude was often quite lost on the British who saw it as evidence of the peoples' acceptance of their rule.

The coming of British colonial administration was the harbinger of the economic doom of the coastal states. In time, roads and railways were to render useless the middlemen role of the coastal states. Admittedly, this took time. But even in these early years up to about 1918, European firms began to push further into the Niger Valley and the coastal hinterland than they had done earlier, as trade followed the flag. For hinterland dwellers this was a happy development. It reduced the distances they had to travel. It removed them from the clutches of the middlemen. In time it led to slightly higher profits. Although the firms acted on their own initiative most of the time, it was the presence of the colonial administration that emboldened them to venture further afield. Those who lived in the coastal states did not fold their arms and accept the new development. The point had been made that it was they who were recruited as guides,

tration in Lowland Division 1898-1959', (MA thesis, Ahmadu Bello University 1979) and my analysis of Tiv resistance in *Fall of Nigeria*. See also A. H. M. Kirk-Greene's article in this volume.

²⁵ See J. B. C. Anyake, 'The Coastal States of Southeastern Nigeria' (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ibadan, 1976).

messengers, interpreters, and political agents in the British push into the hinterland. Some were appointed court members and court clerks in the hinterland as British rule settled down. These lucky few took advantage of their new roles in the colonial service and often did good business in addition to their official duties. Again they were seeking to make the best of their changed situation.²⁶ For the mass of the people of the delta states, however, there can be no doubt that the coming of British colonial rule marked the beginning of their decline, both economically and politically.

In Yorubaland the attempt to establish an effective administration led to considerable confusion in relations between different Yoruba groups, especially between Oyo and Ibadan, Oyo and Ife, Ibadan and Ife.²⁷ In Eastern Yorubaland similar confusion developed between Owo and the Ekiti Kingdoms.²⁸ In his *The New Oyo Empire*, Dr J. A. Atanda has detailed the problems of inter-group relations which attended British rule even in this early phase. The crucial factor was that the British were strangers in the land and did not always understand or care to study the details of pre-colonial relations before they created their administrative divisions: they had neither the time nor the inclination to do so. So at first in the 'Oyo Yoruba' areas, they treated Ibadan, which had emerged from the Yoruba wars as the strongest single power, as the centre of their new administration. Then there was a switch to Oyo as a one-time centre of a large Yoruba empire. While those whom prevalent policy favoured rejoiced, those who felt offended by such policy became sullen and uncooperative. The consequence was fluctuating tensions between groups.

In Hausaland, the British conquest brought about important developments which remain the subject of debate among scholars. According to the propaganda mounted by Lugard to justify conquest, the Fulani rulers, enthroned at the end of the jihad, were veritable ruffians and slave traders who had seized power from the Hausa, the true owners of the land. Confronted with the task of finding agents for local government, these same Fulani became born rulers, the most civilized in these parts. As Adamu Fika's work on Kano has shown, whatever the British thought, there were Hausa groups who saw the British conquest as the signal for rebellion against their Fulani rulers. It must have been a sharp disappointment for them that the British did not, after all, support them in their rebellion.²⁹

Perhaps it was among the non-centralized polities of Nigeria that the greatest confusion attended the coming of British colonial rule. Because of the difficulty of identifying who the real rulers were, there was a great degree of arbitrariness in the appointment of the agents of local government. Units of administration were also carved out in a manner which sometimes defied explanation. The tensions and confusion generated by this state of affairs determined the people's reaction to the new British administration.³⁰

An excellent example of early reaction to British colonial rule during the period under consideration is the Ekumeku movement in Asaba and its hinterland. In the

²⁶ See Anene, *Southern Nigeria*; Ikime, *Niger Delta Rivalry*, and A. E. Afigbo, *The Warrant Chiefs: Indirect Rule in Southeastern Nigeria 1891-1929*, London 1972, for more detailed discussion of this issue.

²⁷ J. A. Atanda, *The New Oyo Empire*, London 1973.

²⁸ See for instance C. O. Akomolafe, 'The Establishment of British Administration and its Impact on Owo-

Akoko Relations, 1919-1935', in *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, vol. 10 (1979), pp 65-85.

²⁹ Adamu H. Fika, *The Kano Civil War and British Overrule 1882-1940*, Ibadan 1978, ch. 6.

³⁰ See Ikime, *Niger Delta Rivalry*, chs. 4-6; Afigbo, *Warrant Chiefs*, and Agi, *British Administration*.

years before Britain took over direct responsibility for what became Nigeria, the Royal Niger Company had been active in Asaba which was, in fact, one of its main centres of operation. The presence of the company's constabulary and other installations had emboldened its servants to adopt an attitude of arrogance towards the Asaba people. Thus they took liberties with the womenfolk, including married women. The Asaba people were unable to obtain any kind of redress. Then came the agents of Christian missions who began to preach against cherished social customs. And as if all this was not enough, the British came with their new-fangled system of administration, involving the establishment of native courts, to membership of which a few hand-picked warrant chiefs were appointed. The operation of the native courts, took from the Igbo elders of Asaba much of their socio-political duty to settle disputes between their people. In addition there were aspects of the British concept of justice which did violence to the people's cherished customs. The elders of Asaba and surrounding towns saw British colonial rule (which encompassed, as far as they were concerned, the Niger Company and missionaries) as subversive of that social order and system which it was their God-ordained duty to uphold and defend. Angered and frustrated by the new situation, the elders organized the young men against the British. In 1902, 1904, and 1909, these young men, with the full backing of their elders, broke forth in rebellion against the British in what has gone down in history as the Ekumeku movement.³¹ Severe repression, killings, and imprisonment followed each outbreak of rebellion as the British sought to bring the situation under control. Manifestations of discontent against British rule were not as conspicuous everywhere as in Asaba. But there certainly were many areas where, as the true meaning of British colonial rule became manifest, a great deal of passive resistance developed against it.

In discussing reactions to British rule, we must take care to indicate that the attitudes of those who found themselves serving as agents of British rule—be they amirs, obas, warrant chiefs, or whatever—was necessarily different from those of the mass of the people. The agents of British colonial rule soon learnt that loyalty to the British paid off. Provided they did not openly fall foul of the British, they could penetrate all kinds of crimes against their people and get away with it. They could also very often enrich themselves considerably. The oppression carried out by these agents was so noticeable in certain instances that in Fika's words, the ordinary people began to look on 'all rule as oppression'.³² In these circumstances, especially in this early period of British rule, it was natural for the masses to feel estranged both from the British and from their own people serving with the British. Estrangement led to rebellions such as the Satiru rebellion,³³ or to a lack of co-operation with the new masters and a dogged continuation with the old ways of doing things. Hence right up to the outbreak of the First World War and even after, there was a great deal that remained unchanged in the lives of the ordinary people.

The outbreak of the First World War itself gave different groups in Nigeria the opportunity to demonstrate their innate rejection of British rule. This was because

³¹ For a detailed treatment of the Ekumeku Movement see P. A. Igbafe, 'Western Igbo Society and its Resistance to British Rule: The Ekumeku Movement, 1898-1911', in *Journal of African History*, 12 (1971), pp. 441-60. A. E. Afigbo, 'Patterns of Igbo Resistance to

British Conquest', in *Tarikh*, 4, 3 (1973), pp. 14-23.

³² Fika, *Kano Civil War*, p. 134.

³³ For a brief discussion of the Satiru rebellion see Adeleye, *Power and Diplomacy*, pp. 323-7.

quite a number of British political officers were recalled to join the army, thereby weakening British control. Additionally, the demands of war time were such that fewer soldiers and even police could be spared for anything other than war duties. It is not intended here to go into the details of these rebellions which have been analysed by Jide Osuntokun.³⁴ What is important to stress is that the Adubi Risings in Egbaland, the Iseyin-Okeiho Rising of 1916,³⁵ the Igbira, Mada, Bassa, Kaiama, Fika, and other rebellions in Northern Nigeria all represented a rejection of important aspects and ingredients of British rule. It is also instructive to note that these rebellions were led not by the Nigerian agents of British rule, but by men whom the masses regarded as their leaders. In other words, beyond the appearance of acceptance by those who stood to gain from the new British arrangements, there was festering discontent on the part of the masses and such groups as felt disadvantaged by British rule. Even when the British consolidated their rule in Nigeria after the First World War, there remained a great deal that was not accepted by the Nigerian peoples.

5. CONCLUSION

In an earlier paper on a related theme, I argued that we should not 'see colonial conquest as a traumatic experience, a sudden, awe-inspiring confrontation. For . . . what ended as colonial conquest was spread over the best part of the nineteenth century, and the politics of colonial conquest and resistance were fitted into the politics of the slave trade, the politics of the Yoruba wars and the politics of the trade in palm produce.'³⁶ The same conclusion is reached in this paper. Europe may have been involved in a 'scramble' for Africa in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, but this scramble was not always obvious to the Africans, certainly those of Nigeria, who, in many ways, continued to want to relate to the British as they had done in the immediately preceding period. For these Africans there appeared to be a continuity in Afro-British relations between the pre-1884 and post-1884 periods. Thus even in situations of heated confrontation, such as with Ja Ja and Nana, these African leaders, as revealed in the extant documentation, went on believing for too long that British good sense would prevail. Ja Ja and Nana, and others like them, were wrong. If the African leaders still thought in terms of pre-1884 relations, the Berlin Conference of 1884-5 with its principle of effective occupation had changed Europe's thinking. British good sense, or what used to be vaunted as the British sense of justice, was definitely jettisoned in the scramble for territory in Africa.

Whatever African leaders thought at the onset of the 'new imperialism', it soon became clear even to them that Britain was determined to use her superior weaponry to ride roughshod over their sovereignty. Those who could mounted military resistance and were subdued. Others adopted diplomatic and passive measures in a vain effort to save their sovereignty. They too failed. Nigeria passed under British colonial rule.

³⁴ J. Osuntokun, *Nigeria and the First World War*, London 1979. See chs. 4 and 5.

³⁵ J. A. Atanda, 'The Iseyin-Okeiho Rising of 1916: An Example of Socio-Political Conflict in Colonial Nigeria', in *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 5

(1969), pp. 497-514.

³⁶ O. Ikime, 'Colonial Conquest and Resistance in Southern Nigeria', in *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 6 (1972), pp. 251-70.

In the changed situation which British colonial rule represented for the Nigerian peoples, the most pressing need was to survive. In this regard some groups were better placed than others in the early phase of British rule. Such groups sought to maximize the benefits they derived from their association with the British. The maximization of these benefits was necessarily done at the expense of other Nigerian groups who lumped the advantaged groups and the British together in a common hatred. Now and then, here and there, this common hatred blossomed into rebellion as the real impact of colonial rule began to be manifest: as young men were taken away from the farms and made to build roads and railways without pay; as new laws and a new concept of justice began to undermine important aspects of the people's social life; and as a few individuals took over local government functions to the chagrin of many who had been accustomed to playing a meaningful role in the affairs of their peoples.

The inadequacy of the British colonial staff made it impossible to reach effectively all the nooks and corners of Nigeria until well into the 1930s. This means that for some groups it was after 1918 that the true meaning of colonial rule began to be grasped. Seen in this perspective, what are usually tagged as tax riots in the late 1920s really represented a recrudescence of rebellion of the type described in this paper. As in the earlier period, military might was needed to quell these rebellions. Thereafter, the peoples of Nigeria appeared to acquiesce to British rule. There remained, however, festering discontent over various aspects of colonial rule which was to provide the basis for the nationalist agitation of the 1940s. Viewed in this manner, the nationalist agitation against colonial rule was but a rebirth of the earlier manifestations of the peoples' opposition to enforced British rule.

Afro-European Relations in the Western Congo Basin c.1884-1885*

MUMBANZA MWA BAWELE

INTRODUCTION

My concern as an African historian is to examine the extent to which the Africans in the period of the Berlin Conference often unwittingly contributed to the more intensified occupation of their continent by various European powers. We shall restrict ourselves here to an examination of Africans to the west of the Congo basin (Zaire).

The study is based on correspondence, accounts of journeys, conferences, and reports by European agents working in this area of the Congo basin. Indeed, in so far as people in the European capitals knew almost nothing at all about the mysteries of the 'dark continent', only the writings of these agents lost in the 'darkness' of the equatorial forest have been decisive in establishing facts relating to the occupation and division of the region.

This analysis is based on a three-part finding, each part varying in the extent of its importance: the establishment of Afro-European contacts in the middle of the nineteenth century, the role of treaties of alliance in the consolidation of European 'rights' of conquest, and the part played by the Africans themselves in intensifying certain local conflicts between different European nationals.

1. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CONTACTS IN CENTRAL AFRICA

When the tireless explorer, H. M. Stanley, travelled along the navigable end of the Congo between Kisangani and Kinshasa, January-March 1877, his task was to find out about and take stock of commercial relations existing between the peoples of the interior of the continent and those on the coast who had already been in contact with the whites for centuries.

This was the period when industrialized Europe, in search of raw materials and outlets, saw some of her sons, already accustomed to Africa, recommend direct and more regular contact with the centre of the continent. Stanley was one of these people, particularly with regard to the basin of the Congo, as can be seen from his succinct description of its trade in ivory and other materials from the coast up as far as Lisala.¹

Africa for its part was ready to welcome more European goods, as Stanley was able to note with keen interest, through the greed of its chiefs and the population with whom

* Translated by Eamon Helly.

¹ H. M. Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent: The Sources of the Nile around the Great Lakes of Equatorial Africa and down the Livingstone River to the Atlantic Ocean*, 2 vols., London 1878, vol. 2, pp. 358-9.

he had come into contact during the course of his long journey between Kisangani and Boma. In fact a large part of the population living along the river and its main tributaries were actually looking for these 'mysterious' goods.

Similarly, without being in direct contact with the whites who supplied the various goods which came to them, the indigenous population along the banks of the Congo had integrated these products into their local commerce. Firearms, gunpowder, fabrics and pearls, glasses, and empty bottles, mirrors, marine salt, and so on had already spread in usage as far as Lisala, more than 1,000 km. up river from Kinshasa.

As a result of the progressive absorption of all these new cultural features, the social and political structure had undergone important changes. All these elements were a basis for the acceptance of the white man whose whale-boats and steamers from 1881 onwards ploughed the river and its tributaries in search of natural wealth while, at the same time, settlements were being built which were to serve later as a basis for actual colonial conquest. This is the context in which Cathérine Coquery-Vidrovitch speaks of merchandise preceding the arrival of the white man and permitting Africans to progress from a subsistence economy towards adopting an economy based on trade with Europe.²

Various African groups had in effect learned to travel relatively long distances in search of goods intended for export. In this way they had succeeded in weaving a series of economic networks and, in the process, a new social network.³

One of the most widespread practices by means of which both Europeans and Africans made great profits during the first years of the arrival of the whites was the tradition existing in the area of the middle river known as *ndeko* or blood pact.⁴

Although the ivory and slave traders were not completely safe from attack on commercial routes, not even in the large markets, they could always rely on the support of their blood brothers. In effect the *ndeko* signified a sacred bond requiring local chiefs to defend their brothers coming from long distances whenever they became the object of unjust attack by other members of the village.

The clan or lineage leaders who, in general, were the best known for fraternizing with foreigners, thus became favoured commercial partners. The chiefs of the middle Congo were later to try to establish a similarly lucrative arrangement with the new and rich traders, the Europeans.

This is the context in which we must try to enquire into the meaning of these treaties which translated into European terms one of the most honoured symbols of African kinship, the ancient alliances of blood-brotherhood.

² C. Coquery-Vidrovitch, *Brazza et la prise de possession du Congo: La mission de l'ouest-africain 1883-1885*, Paris 1969, p. 12.

³ R. W. Harms, *River of Wealth, River of Sorrow: The Central Zaire Basin in the Era of the Slave and Ivory Trade, 1500-1891*, New Haven-London 1981, pp. 71-85; Mumbanza mwa Bawele, 'Histoire des peuples riverains de l'entre Zaire-Ubangi: Évolution sociale et économique, ca. 1700-1930', Ph. D. thesis, UNAZA,

Lubumbashi 1980, pp. 383-493.

⁴ Mokaka mwa Bomunga, 'Ndeko ou pacte de sang chez les Bangala de Bomongo: Essai d'analyse de la notion d'amour du prochain en un milieu africain'. Mémoire de Licence in Theology and the Human Sciences, Faculty of Catholic Theology, Kinshasa 1977; Mumbanza mwa Bawele, 'Histoire des peuples riverains', p. 429.

2. THE ROLE OF TREATIES OF ALLIANCE IN THE CONSOLIDATION OF EUROPEAN 'RIGHTS' IN AFRICA

2.1. *Historical context and distortion of the truth: the Africans betrayed by their white brothers*

As Jean Dresch stresses in his preface to a book by Jean Suret-Canale, 'The majority [of whites] ignored them [African civilizations] and took part in the elaboration of the colonial legend based partly on real, partly on sham heroics, on cheap exoticism and on carefully concealed dishonour and misery.'⁵

The history of these treaties therefore forms part of this legend. A modern African's interest in this history consequently may seem something like self-indulgence. However, treaties and agreements continue to be signed in other contexts. We should therefore draw a lesson from these first contacts (some of which go beyond the compass of this volume). This will enable us to give a wide berth to all those poisoned gifts which at the moment are being held out to us in various forms of co-operation, as our ignorance and gluttony continues to be exploited.

One of the basest deceptions perpetrated by the European agents working in Africa was to have interpreted the treaties of friendship concluded with the African leaders as acts of submission by the latter who, at one go, had yielded up property rights to the Europeans.

Thus the Makoko treaties 'handing over' the kingdom of Teke to France, like all other treaties on behalf of the *Comité d'Études du Haut-Congo*, later the *Association Internationale du Congo*, and, finally, the Independent State of the Congo, were part of a European strategy of conquest which was perfectly understood only by the agents who were directly involved. The Africans themselves were unaware of any significance other than the alliance or fraternizing with foreigners.

In fact the history of the alliance between Africans and Europeans shows that there was nothing new about the practice adopted in Central Africa in the middle of the nineteenth century. Without wishing to go back to the initial periods of the European penetration into Central Africa and the treaties signed by the Mani Kongo and the kings of Portugal, we can point out that in the middle of the nineteenth century all business establishments set up on land belonging to African chiefs along the Atlantic coast or at the mouth of the river were subject to negotiation and private agreement, as one of the agents, Alexander Delcommune, explains:

A cette époque, tout comptoir qui s'installait dans un endroit quelconque de Bas-Congo devait, avant tout, obtenir des princes de l'endroit l'autorisation de s'établir sur un terrain qu'il désignait naturellement lui-même. Ce choix se portait toujours à la rive du flauve ou d'un de ses affluents, pour la facilité des transports et des communications. Il payait ce terrain au prince par une valeur en marchandises ne dépassant pas généralement 30 à 40 francs. L'Européen prenait l'étendue du terrain qu'il voulait et les limites de celui-ci étaient fixées par les délégués des princes . . .⁶

These authorizations, it goes without saying, never implied the definitive surrender of land to the foreigners and, still less, the acceptance of tutelage. These same traditional practices along the coast to some extent contributed to the success of the *Association*

⁵ J. Suret-Canale, *L'Afrique noire occidentale et centrale: Géographie — Civilisations — Histoire*, Paris 1961, p. 7.

⁶ A. Delcommune, *Vingt Années de vie africaine, 1873-1893*, 2 vols., Brussels 1922, vol. 1, pp. 43-4.

Internationale Africaine (AIA), a product of the Geographical Conference in Brussels in 1876, whose aim had been the organization of expeditions and the setting up of scientific stations. The Study Committee of the Upper Congo, created two years later in 1878 and with openly commercial objectives, was of the opinion that the only way of working in peace was by means of negotiating with the African chiefs. This was how they would obtain land on which to set up their commercial stations.

Thus it required no great effort on Stanley's part to succeed in reaching an agreement with the chiefs and leading inhabitants of Vivi, the first station of the Study Committee of the Upper Congo. The envoy of the king of Belgium was well received by the natives who were anxious to have their own trading post just like their brothers in Boma and moreover on the Atlantic coast. During the course of the negotiations, which took place on 27–8 September 1879, like traders in the past, Stanley asked first for a large piece of land on which a station would be built. Then he requested the opening of the routes to the interior, a new element in negotiation to be found equally in Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza. To the natives willing to listen to his plans, Stanley spoke in the following terms:

I replied: 'State that I am glad to hear them speak so kindly to the white man. Today I do not want much. I want ground to build my houses, for I am about to build many, either here or elsewhere. I want ground enough, if I can get it, to make gardens and fields. Vivi is not good for that unless I go far up; but what I do get I want for myself and people, and the right to say what white man shall come near me. At Boma the chiefs have cut the ground up small; there is no room for me. I want plenty of room, and that is why I have come up here. I want to go inland, and must have the right to make roads wherever it is necessary, and all men that pass by those roads must be allowed to pass without interruption. No chief must lay his hand on them and say, 'This country is mine; pay me something; give me gin, or cloth, or so many guns.' . . . What I saw on the road to Boma must not be repeated here. You have no roads in your country. It is a wilderness of grass, rocks, bush; and there at Banza Vivi is the end of all life. If you and I can agree, I shall change all that.'⁷

The concessions made by the natives in exchange for the special advantage of 'owning' a trading post seem enormous:

The conference began by the lingster, Massala, describing how the chiefs had gone home, and consulted together for a long time: they had agreed that if the Mundelé would stay with them, that of all the land occupied by villages of fields and gardens, I should make my choice and build as many houses, and make as many roads, and do any kind of work I liked; that I should be considered as the 'Mundelé' of Vivi, and no other white man should put foot on Vivi soil, which stretched from the Lufu up to the Banza Kulu district, and inland down to the Loa River, without permission from me; no native chief of inland or river side should molest any man in my employ within the district of Vivi; help should be given for work, and the people of Vivi, such as liked, should engage themselves as workmen; anybody, white or black, native or foreign, passing to and fro through the land, should do so freely, night and day, without let or hindrance; if any disagreement should arise between any of my people, white or black, and the people of Vivi, they, the chiefs, would promise not to try and revenge themselves, but bring their complaint before the Mundelé of Vivi, that he might decide upon the right and wrong of it; and if any of their people were caught in the act of doing wrong, then the white man shall promise that his chief shall be called to hear the case against him, and if the crime is proved, the

⁷ H. M. Stanley, *The Congo and the Founding of its Free State: A Study of Work and Exploration*, 2 vols., London 1885, vol. 1, pp. 132–3.

chief shall pay the fine according to custom. 'All this,' continued Massala, 'shall be set down in writing and you shall read it, and the English lingster shall tell it straight to us. But first we must settle what the chiefs shall receive in return for these concessions.'⁸

It is difficult, of course, to assess the part played by the interpreter or by Stanley himself in the writing up of such agreements, many of whose clauses, especially those relating to security, are consistent with agreements existing elsewhere in the lower river. One thing is certain in all this however, the natives only made concessions in so far as the demands of the Europeans did not impinge on their own immediate lifestyle. Indeed they never for one moment imagined that the whites had already altered their policies while making use of a relatively new tradition with regard to commercial stations. They were therefore unable to detect the political designs of the new Europeans who were slyly pushing them into entering such agreements.

Afterwards when the competition began which was to lead to the dismemberment of the continent, all these agreements acquired a special significance for the European powers. All these 'builders' simply brandished their sham historical arguments in order to acquire the advantages of the first occupant, in the manner of the Portuguese and the Spanish who had divided up the world at the beginning of the modern era, simply because they had visited certain countries and then set up their landmarks signifying possession.

Europe in the nineteenth century still believed in the validity of such evidence even though, as we shall mention further on, it did not fail to provoke surprise and puzzlement in some quarters. Thus in the west of the Zaire basin the agents of the Study Committee of the Upper Congo in the service of the king of Belgium as well as the West African Mission (French Committee of the AIA) indulged in a systematic collection of treaties from all African chiefs of any importance.

The most spectacular of the treaties signed between the Europeans and the African chiefs of this region, treaties which were loaded with consequences for the future of the entire country, were those signed on the southern bank of Pool by Brazza representing France and by Makoko, king of the Bateke or his representatives.⁹ Brazza's request for their ratification caused long debates in the French Assembly and, for the first time in history, involved a European nation in taking possession of African land situated in the interior of the continent.

Since the details of the discussions which were to lead to the signing of these treaties are somewhat diffuse, we prefer to begin with the elegant flourishes from the pen of Coquilhat in order to show on the one hand the trickery—not to say the bad faith of the Europeans—and on the other hand the ignorance and credulity of the African chiefs.¹⁰ The author begins by stressing an interesting aspect of European strategy of which many of those responsible for African policy in the European capitals were comparatively ignorant. This is how he introduces his account of negotiations held with Chief Makuentcho on 28 December 1882:

Comme on m'a souvent paru fort intrigué en Europe au sujet de la manière dont nous obtenions l'abandon des privilèges aussi considérables des chefs indigènes qui nous

⁸ Stanley, *Congo*, vol. 1, pp. 135–6.

Les traités Makoko, 1880–1882, Paris 1972, p. 66.

⁹ N. Ney, *Conférences et lettres de P. Savorgnan de Brazza sur les trois explorations dans l'Ouest africain de 1875 à 1886*, Paris 1887, pp. 160–1; H. Brunswick, *Brazza Explorateur*:

¹⁰ C. Coquilhat, *Sur le Haut-Congo*, Paris 1888, pp. 89–94.

connaissaient peu ou point, je vais donner en détails cette palabre qui ressemble à beaucoup d'autres ayant rapport à des cas semblables.¹¹

The first contacts which elsewhere seemed difficult were here facilitated by commercial customs requiring initially the giving of presents to the local population as a token of friendship. These gifts were generally reimbursed in the form of other goods from their hosts:

Au débarqué, le Capitaine Hanssens avait envoyé quatre brasses de foulards imprimés à Makuentcho, en signe de dispositions amicales. Cet acte est conforme aux coutumes des indigènes, entre eux. C'est une règle essentielle dans les débuts. Il ne peut être question quand on n'a pas la force ou qu'on ne veut pas l'employer, d'imposer les idées ou les agissements de l'Europe à des populations qui n'en ont pas la moindre notion et que l'on désire, non pas détruire, mais assimiler graduellement.

Makuentcho avait été enchanté du cadeau. Il fut complètement rassuré quand il eut dénombré notre fiable escorte. Le Blanc, venant dans ces conditions, ne pouvait avoir mauvais desseins. Le chef ainsi préparé, voulut se montrer hospitalier. Il nous offrit une case pour logement et des poules, ainsi que du manioc.¹²

Without wishing to linger on the fact that Europe at the end of the nineteenth century, the Europe of national identities, lacked these kinds of customs for promoting *détente* among nations, let us say that the whites succeeded in their action thanks to their exact understanding of the African socio-economic structures. In this way they avoided the mistakes that might have compromised an undertaking that was intended to go smoothly. Real negotiations always began with the presentation by the foreigner who had to reveal his good intentions already expressed in the offering of gifts. Then the village chief or the chief of the region invited the foreigner to fraternize so that he might be reassured that the host was going to keep his word. In fact blood brothers were required to promise absolute fidelity. The black man was therefore mistaken in believing that the white man taking part in this blood ritual had the same conception of fraternity as he:

La palabre commence.—Je suis N'Sasi, frère de Boula-Matari (Stanley), dit le Capitaine. Boula-Matari n'a jamais pu s'arrêter chez toi; il le regrette. Une maladie cruelle le tient loin d'ici au M'Poutou (en Europe). Il m'a chargé de le remplacer pour quelques lunes et d'aller t'assurer de ses sentiments d'amitié.

Makuentcho répondit:—Boula-Matari est un grand chef; il est riche et fort. J'étais peiné de le voir passer devant mon village, sans jamais venir s'y reposer. Ses compliments me rendent heureux.

Si tu es sincère, faisons échange de sang, qui nous créera frères pour toujours.¹³

In order to be more readily accepted, the whites boasted about the wealth—no doubt real enough—of their leaders in Europe who were ready to flood the country with various merchandise in exchange for a treaty of friendship with the envoys:

Ta proposition, repliqua Hanssens, me réjouit, je l'accepte. Cependant, avant de procéder à cette agréable cérémonie, je veux t'ouvrir mon esprit. Boula-Matari et moi nous sommes les envoyés d'un grand roi du M'Poutou, qui veut amener les blancs, ses sujets, à installer les maisons de commerce dans tous vos pays, pour y introduire les marchandises de sa contrée et pour acheter votre ivoire. Mais les blancs ne viendront que s'ils sont certains de l'amitié des

¹¹ Ibid., p. 89.

¹² Ibid., p. 90.

¹³ Ibid.

noirs et de la paix. La guerre empêche le commerce. La jalousie des chefs et des tribus amène la guerre.

Pour empêcher ces maux, notre grand chef ne veut conseiller aux marchands blancs leur établissement que dans les pays qui lui reconnaîtront le droit de faire juger leurs différends extérieurs par ses envoyés, et qui n'admettront que les étrangers recommandés par lui.

Votre grand roi est très prudent et très sage, interrompt Makuentcho, et je comprends qu'il n'enverra chez nous que des marchands à lui pour recueillir lui-même le bénéfice du commerce.¹⁴

The reader should be aware that a clause essential to the whites, namely the right of arbitration, was rather unclear to the Africans since such a clause actually conflicted with local tradition. The natives were aware of the baleful effects of acts of piracy perpetrated along the commercial routes and the conflicts between two camps were always settled by the leaders of neutral camps chosen by common consent. As to the exclusive rights claimed by Bula-Matari's king, nothing could be wiser or more prudent in order to secure commercial monopoly, as the African chief so well put it. All these points were apparently considered irrelevant to the negotiating proceedings. Coquilhat eloquently draws attention to this by attempting to reflect as if from the black chief's viewpoint:

Tu te trompes, continua le Capitaine. Notre roi est très riche et il n'a besoin d'aucun bénéfice; mais quand, grâce à lui, son peuple s'enrichit, il est plus aimé et son nom devient plus grand. Ici Makuentcho devient rêveur. Il ne comprenait plus rien. Au bout de cinq minutes, ses yeux s'illuminèrent. Il saisissait à sa façon. Le blanc était aussi habile que le nègre à prodiguer de belles paroles. Dès lors il était poli et adroit de paraître le croire, afin d'obtenir un comptoir dans le village. La demande des droits d'arbitrage et d'autorisation d'admission des étrangers faisait sourire intérieurement Makuentcho. Comment les Blancs avec leurs petites escortes et leurs rares bateaux, pourraient-ils jamais exercer ces droits? Décidément, l'affaire était bonne. N'Sasi allait le combler de présents immédiats en vue d'avantage lointains. D'ailleurs, une factorerie serait une bonne chose pour la contrée. L'on veillerait à vivre en bonne intelligence avec les marchands du M'Poutou. Les blancs sont d'habiles ouvriers: ils font des étoffes, des perles, des miroirs, des fusils, de la poudre, toutes choses extraordinaires; mais ils sont orgueilleux. Il faut les flatter en leur accordant les choses impraticables qu'ils demandent. Mais il importe d'en faire valoir le prix, afin qu'ils payent cher. Ces réflexions faites, Makuentcho déclara trouver le projet du Roi de N'Sasi très beau et être d'autant plus disposé à faire l'échange de sang.¹⁵

Note the irony with which Coquilhat underlines the black's enthusiasm to sacrifice the future in exchange for the immediate benefits of the present.

As in the region of the lower river, the land demanded for the construction of a trading post is readily granted in exchange for a few presents which the author values at fifty francs worth of fabrics and hardware:

Encore un mot pourtant, réplique Hanssens. Je désirerais obtenir dès maintenant un terrain, afin d'y bâtir dans quelques lunes un village pour le délégué que Bula-Matari placera chez toi.

Toute la colline est à toi, fit Makuentcho. Mais puis-je avoir les présents qui me sont destinés? Tu les verras demain à midi.

Non, pas en plein jour, mais la nuit. Mes sujets seraient trop jaloux s'ils voyaient ce que vous me donnerez. Je voudrais leur distribuer presque la moitié de ce que j'aurai reçu. . . . Le Capitaine acquiesça au désir du chef d'être gratifié dans l'ombre.¹⁶

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 91.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 92.

This is how the whites managed to cheat the blacks and take away their rights of sovereignty. They simply abused the confidence of the natives who were unaware of the real designs of the white conquerors who were disguised as tradesmen. The final operation was the signing of the treaty sanctioning the dependence of the blacks. The blood-brotherhood ceremony offered the whites their greatest opportunity. Under the pretext that they had submitted to local custom, the whites, as a gesture of reciprocation, invited the natives to participate in their European customs. In this case it was a matter of sealing a pact of friendship by signing a document which would speak in days to come:

Mais tout n'était pas fini. Il restait à lui faire apposer une marque tenant lieu de signature, au bas d'un traité destiné à nous mettre en règle aux yeux des pouvoirs européens.

Or, là gisait la difficulté. Les nègres non en contact permanent avec les blancs comme le sont ceux du bas-fleuve, ignoraient encore la signification du papier et de l'écriture. . . .

Mais notre plan était fait. Et nous passâmes la matinée copier à trois exemplaires.

Le moment de l'échange du sang est venu. Makuentcho, accompagné de sa femme favorite et d'un conseiller intime vient s'asseoir en face du Capitaine; celui-ci retrousse sa manche droite. A l'aide d'un couteau, une incision de trois millimètres de longueur est fait dans la peau de chacun des futurs frères, près du coude droit. Une poudre mystérieuse est semée sur la gouttelette de sang qui apparaît. Puis les incisions sont frottées l'une contre l'autre de manière à amener le mélange des sangs dans les deux plaies. Makuentcho énonce en même temps les obligations que Hanssens contracte envers lui. Omari énumère ensuite les engagements auxquels sera soumis désormais le chef natif envers N'Sasi et son Roi. Et tous deux se félicitent de cet heureux événement.

Chef frère Makuentcho, s'écrie solennellement Hanssens, maintenant que nous venons de sceller notre amitié d'après la coutume de ton pays, cimentons-la suivant l'usage des blancs.

Avec le plus grand plaisir, répond le frère noir enthousiasmé. Aussitôt, le Capitaine exhibe les trois copies du traité et je lui passe la plume chargée d'encre que je tenais prête.

Hanssens reprend: cette marque que les nègres se font sur le bras par incision, les blancs la remplacent par une marque sur cette étoffe blanche (le papier). Ce *taratara* répète les paroles des engagements, d'amitié et les empêche de se perdre. Chacun y met un signe d'une forme personnelle qui ne permet pas qu'on le prenne pour celui d'un autre.¹⁷

To the indiginous chief who considered lengthily before signing the treaty, doubtless for reasons of superstition but also for all the possible consequences of an act he was about to perform and whose significance he did not fully appreciate, the interpreter explains all the advantages and, at the same time, those of possessing the flag he is about to present him. And it is not without irony that Coquilhat describes the pride of the chief, their brothers, who signs the treaty of his enslavement and then carefully folds his copy:

Omari, bien stylé, lui assure qu'au contraire, ce traité le rendant le protégé de notre Roi, jamais aucun blanc le lui fera du mal et que tous le respecteront, s'il montre le traité et le drapeau qu'on lui remet. Cet emblème exige des éclaircissements supplémentaires. Le drapeau est le signe public de l'alliance; les nègres ont des tatouages qui différencient les tribus; les blancs ont les drapeaux, etc., etc.

Arrivé au comble de la perplexité, Makuentcho éclate tout à coup de rire. Les blancs ont des coutumes fort drôles, finit-il par s'écrier. Et il dessine résolument une croix fantastique sur

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 92-3.

chacune des trois copies. Tout en s'esclaffant, il enveloppe soigneusement dans une feuille sèche de bananier l'exemplaire qui lui est donné, et le fait porter dans le réceptacle secret de ses choses précieuses.¹⁸

Such was the historical context in which the treaties were signed which were to serve as proof of the rights of certain nations in the eyes of the European power.

Let us for the present return to the treaties between Brazza and the Bateke in order to compare them with those of the Study Committee of the Upper Congo. It is clear that Brazza's journal notes make no mention of the custom of blood brotherhood which is elsewhere practised among the Bateke of Pool. Yet the negotiations with the Makoko took place within the same context of setting up commercial enterprises. For the Bateke the presence of the white man in the kingdom of Makoko was an important event, bearing in mind what this foreigner represented in terms of the new economy. That is why Brazza was welcomed with all the honours due to a great chief, even before he explained to the king his purpose in coming to his country:

Le 29/8/1880 — Je vais, le matin, voir le chef auquel je puis mieux expliquer ce que je suis venu faire ici. Je lui parle de ce que j'ai fait autrefois sur l'Ogooué (que ici on appelle Lebane) et (de) ce que le chef des blancs français m'a envoyé faire actuellement, c'est-à-dire établir un village de Blancs chez les Ondoumbo pour ouvrir la route entre ce pays et le pays des Blancs et pour nous ouvrir la route plus loin pour aller par l'Alima, dans l'Olumo, du côté de son cours supérieur par où les Blancs vont aller avec leurs grandes pirogues qui marchent avec le feu—ce village est terminé lui ai-je dit, et alors je suis venu par terre sur Olumo pour voir les routes et les chefs du pays et pour voir la place où les blancs qui portent le même pavillon que moi peuvent venir faire un autre village, sur les bords de la grande rivière pour le ravitaillement de leurs grandes pirogues. C'est pour cela que j'ai été chez Ngampey et c'est pour cela que je viens le voir, lui qui commande la terre ici. De plus, lui dis-je, comme Ngampey est tout près de Qua (Congo) et que les Abanho sont ses voisins, je l'ai chargé d'informer leur chef de la part des Blancs, que les Blancs vont venir avec leurs pirogues dans la grande rivière et dans Olumo et que moi, qui suis venu ici à l'avance par terre, leur propose au nom des Blancs, la paix ou la guerre. Qu'ils choisissent l'une ou l'autre.

De plus, lui dis-je, en faisant allusion à la mission qui m'est confiée, (par le) comité français de l'Association africaine, du choix d'une seconde station favorablement choisie pour servir de base d'opération aux vapeurs français qui seraient lancés dans le Congo, ce n'est pas seulement dans le haut de l'Olumo que les Blancs viendront; ils viendront aussi par le bas de l'Olumo et de la rivière Qua, et là, ils feront un autre village, pour pouvoir, s'ils veulent, s'ouvrir par là, une autre route qui les ramène à Obo (la mer). La satisfaction de Makoko et de ses femmes alors, s'est manifestée par des battements de mains et Makoko m'a dit que, autrefois, un blanc avait voulu venir dans son pays, mais qu'il avait été arrêté par la fièvre et était retourné sur ses pas.¹⁹

The king of Bateke knew that the white man had been settled along the coast for many years without causing any harm to the Bakongo; on the contrary, their villages (commercial settlements) were the source of a new wealth to the natives; wealth which the Bakongo and the Bazombo brought to Pool. That is why he was delighted to learn that whites were also going to build a settlement on his territory and also bring him wealth. Thus all his generosity in giving land had no other aim than that of persuading the Europeans. The latter, however, needed little convincing since they were only too well aware of his legendary, if highly self-seeking, hospitality.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 94.

¹⁹ Brunswick, *Brazza*, pp. 54-8.

Le 9/9/1880. Makoko vient pour me parler . . . Et alors il fait appeler le féticheur et en sa présence et celle de ses deux frères, il me dit que, comme je suis venu ici, portant la parole du chef des blancs pour les Abanho et les Aboma, de même il va me charger des porter sa parole au chef des Blancs de mon pays et de lui dire que le chef Makoko, qui a toujours été loin des Blancs, apprenant que les Blancs vont venir dans ce pays et qu'ils veulent y faire des villages, il prend toute sa terre et la donne aux chef des Blancs, pour que le Chef des Blancs s'ouvre une route entre son pays et le pays que Makoko vient de lui donner et qu'il y envoie un Blanc de ses Nganciu [?] pour le représenter ici et pour commander à tous les chefs ses vassaux. Que les Bateke sont amis des Blancs et, s'ils viennent, ils leur donneront tout ce qu'il leur faut pour faire leurs villages. 'D'ailleurs, a-t-il terminé, pour que le chef des Blancs sache bien que je lui cède ma terre, je t'en donnerai demain en présence de tous les chefs une poignée pour la lui apporter comme signe de la cession que je lui fais.'²⁰

To Africans who understand the sacred character of the land and its inalienability, it is unthinkable that the king, without motive, could hand over his country to the foreigner. It goes without saying that nowhere in the world has a people renounced its sovereignty and accepted enslavement without a struggle. Subsequent African history demonstrates this well. To return to the Bateke, it should be made clear that the attribution of rights of residence or development implied taking possession of the land in order to make peace with the presiding local spirits. The land was actually represented by a tiny packet of china clay into which was placed a small object of value. The clay given to the developer was supposed to assure him protection from all danger. It was therefore entirely natural that the king should send a little clay to his distant friend and so allow him to enjoy immediately the blessing of his land. It is in this same spirit that we should understand the terms of final agreement submitted to Makoko in the presence of all the Teke chiefs and which Brazza worked into the form of a treaty of dependency or a request for protection:

En résumé il a dit ceci: 'Nous aimons les Blancs. Va dire à leur chef qu'ils viennent s'établir dans notre pays, où ils voudront, et que, quant à moi, je donne au chef des Blancs toute la terre qui est sur mon autorité e je la mets sous sa dépendence. Pour signe de ce que je lui donne, prends cette terre où j'ai mis une chose de toutes celle qui poussent dans notre pays fertile. Porte-la au chef des Blancs et dis-lui que Makoko lui donne sa terre. Qu'il envoie un chef pour la commander. Donne nous en partant un pavillon pour que tout le monde sache que Nduo est Nduo falla.'²¹

With regard to this reduction of the country to a state of dependency, this can only be seen as another example of reality being transformed in order to serve a cause, the colonial cause. At that precise moment in history the Teke kingdom had no need whatsoever of protection for it was not being threatened by any of its neighbours. If Makoko could really have made such a speech then it is doubtless because Brazza had led him to believe that other whites who were going to enter his country (understand by this the agents of Leopold II) were bad and could threaten his kingdom. To escape from their grasp they therefore had to put themselves under French protection. We shall return to this later.

With regard to the flag which the Africans accepted and proudly hoisted at the conclusion of the treaties, it symbolized to them their fraternity with the whites and

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 65-6.

²¹ Ibid., p. 66. The meaning of the words, 'Nduo falla', is unknown.

promised the setting up of a European commercial station in the future. At least this is what Makoko reminds Brazza:

Seulement toi, tu vas partir. Si d'autres Blancs viennent, comment sauront-ils ce qui a été parlé entre nous, si tu ne me donnes pas quelque chose qui leur fasse savoir. Tu me dis que tous les Blancs de ton pays portent le pavillon que l'on met sur les villages, que l'on met sur les pirogues de ton pays. Mais maintenant que cette terre est à ton pays, pourquoi ne me donnes-tu pas un pavillon pour que je l'arbore sur mon village?²²

The French and the agents of the king of Belgium were still signing treaties of this kind with natives both in the lower and upper river when the Conference of Berlin opened in 1884. If we may be allowed to summarize, then let us say that for four years various political communities in the west of the Congo basin, attracted by the promise of an abundance of European goods, had signed treaties of friendship without suspecting in the least the true political motives which animated the Europeans.

2.2. *The true impact of the treaties of friendship with the African chiefs.*

If the role played by the aforementioned treaties in Europe is quite well known, then less well known is their real significance in the consolidation of European settlement in Africa. This is what we are now going to examine more closely.

The image of a Central Africa blindly conquered by European commerce should be corrected since chiefs such as Makuentcho were rare. Coquilhat describes the latter as one of the most easily persuaded of kings. Other African chiefs did not always accept so readily the rhetoric of the whites. They were unwilling to sign any documents whose import in the white man's country was unknown to them without first being given sufficient guarantees. Enlightening in this regard are the accounts by Camille Coquilhat who took part in all the river centre negotiations from Kwa-Mouth as far as Mankanza. Several chiefs were sceptical about future relations with the white man and therefore did not wish to make decisions before first taking all the necessary precautions. Similarly in the large settlements such as Bolobo, Lokolela, Ilebo, Mbandaka, Lolanga, Mankanza, Bobeka, Bopoto, and so on, concluding a treaty was not such a simple matter and negotiations sometimes lasted several days. In some places such as Mankanza they even failed once or twice. All these complications were due to two factors, one magico-religious and the other socio-economic.

First, the cultural, magico-religious factor. Several Africans of the middle river felt a certain mistrust for the white man whom they likened to *Bizo* (singular *Ezo*) a kind of siren inhabiting whirlpools or great deeps generally near villages or ancient sites. This barrier was quickly broken down as news from downstream natives confirmed the humanness of the white man.

The biggest obstacle were the soothsayers (the *Banganga*) some of whom had warned the African people quite firmly that, once installed, it was going to be impossible to force them to leave the country. Therefore they should be dealt with immediately and refused rights of settlement. In fact in spite of the already mentioned attraction of European merchandise, various chiefs almost without fail first consulted their ancestors to try to find out the real motivation for the white presence in their territory. According

²² Ibid.

to the whites, themselves duly cynical of this practice, the soothsayers were often in favour of their presence. This is what convinced chiefs such as Makoko and Mata-Boike that they should accept their arrival.²³

Yet from the very same sources we know that the main opposition to the presence of the whites came from those under the influence of the so-called sorcerers. Such was the case of Kanza, chief of Boroukwasamba (read Bolokowansamba) near the equatorial station of Wangata who refused outright to meet or to sign treaties with the whites. Such too is doubtless the case of Mongonga of Bongwele who was responsible for the failure of all the preliminary negotiations led by Stanley 5-9 January 1884 with the Mabale and the Iboko of Mankanza, later Bangala station.²⁴

Thus the opinion of the population was often derived concerning the true nature of the white man's settlements and this led to the lengthening of negotiations. Still at Mankanza, the second round of negotiations, led this time by Captain Hanssens, took up as many days as the first round, 5-9 May 1884. In spite of the fact that Mata-Boike, the head chief, offered some small territory and signed a treaty of friendship on 7 May, the other Mabale chiefs and even an influential member of the Mata-Boike clan, Mungimbe, continued to oppose Coquilhat's settlement. Mata-Boike had to use all his weight to decide the matter and virtually impose the establishment of the white man on 'his land' for reasons of strategy: an alliance with the whites against the enemy, the Bobeka.²⁵

The reactions of the *Banganga*, who had not had their way when the whites had settled in Mankanza, were best expressed when in October 1885 they encouraged the population to attack Van Kerckoven in order once and for all to remove the interfering presence of the white man from their settlement.²⁶

Now the socio-economic factor. In so far as members of village communities did not belong to the same clan or lineage, certain hamlets, not directly involved in blood brotherhood between clan or lineage chiefs and the whites, were deprived of particular economic advantages. They therefore and not without reason warned of the possible danger of a more or less independent establishment (and for how long?) in their village or settlement. We may point out that the purchase by the whites of or, more precisely, their being allocated some land in the middle river was something of an innovation when compared with the settlements of African merchants who, whether settled on a temporary basis or for a prolonged period, were directly sheltered and lodged by their hosts, their blood brothers. That is why the transformation of the allocated land into fortified encampments provoked distrust everywhere among the population. The natives of Iboko, for example, did not hesitate to attribute warlike intentions to their European guests. The whites had therefore to engage in further 'palaver' and make the natives understand that these security measures were intended as a means of better

²³ Ibid.; Coquilhat, *Haut-Congo*, p. 215. Here is what he says of Mata-Boike: 'Mata-Boike se rend à Bolobo. Sa pirogue brillamment décorée porte à l'arrière un petit panier fétiche . . . Le vieillard entreprend ce voyage pour aller consulter un devin fameux sur les conséquences de son alliance avec l'homme blanc.'

²⁴ C. Van Groenweghe, 'Les Premiers Traités conclus avec les chefs indigènes par Vangele à Equateur-Station en 1883-84: D'après les documents inédits', in *Annales*

Aequatoria, 1 (1980), pp. 185-211, esp. p. 193; Coquilhat, *Haut-Congo*, pp. 188-95.

²⁵ Coquilhat, *Haut-Congo*, pp. 196-200. Mata-Boike had fallen into the trap prepared by the whites who were using the threat of a possible alliance with the Bobeka, his enemies, in order to force him to agree to the setting up of a station.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 510-12.

controlling their men (African soldier-workers being considered at that time as slaves of the whites by the other Africans) and for the protection of their goods from robbers.²⁷

Let us return to the particular economic advantages by saying that they succeeded in dividing the Africans. The hamlet chiefs, on whose territory the stations had been set up, tried to control all commerce between station people and their neighbours. In accordance with an already existing trade regulation, the chiefs imposed taxes on the neighbouring villages for any exchanges with the whites. Such a situation needless to say led to periods of tension between the whites and their African hosts; periods which, however fleeting, were none the less serious since the Africans tried to keep the Europeans as much as possible within their 'dependency'.

Consequently the negative attitude of the whites *vis-à-vis* the taxes imposed by the Africans (the whites claimed the actual freedom of movement) led to the economic boycotting of the stations. The resulting test of strength represented the first open conflict between Africans of that region and their white settlers. Such was the situation at Wangata (equatorial station) with Mata-Boike and his kinsmen. At Wangata for the first time there was an economic blockade of a European station. Five months after having set up the station, the whites opposed the control exercised by Chief Ikenge over the transactions of other natives with this station. On 11 December 1883, with the help of several allied villages, Ikenge forbade all supply of provisions of station personnel. The station, deprived of all source of food, could last only ten days. After vainly trying to break the blockade by offers to Ikenge's enemies, the whites had no alternative but to begin an armed conflict in order to extricate themselves from the situation. The conflict erupted on 20 December and Chief Ikenge was killed after first killing a Zanzibari with his lance.²⁸

At Mankanza the station blockade lasted fifty-four days. There were two reasons for that. Coquilhat, having learned his lesson from the Wangata blockade, had arranged reserves of food and thus delayed the effect of the blockade. Only the inhabitants of Mankanza village were authorized to sell provisions to the station though at very high prices. Thus from 9 December 1884 to 27 January 1885 Coquilhat was unable to break the unity of the Mabale and Iboko villages who were both affected by the big chief's prohibition. By means of an intense propaganda campaign Coquilhat finally managed to persuade particular Mabale groups to sell him provisions. War broke out between Bongwele natives who were defending the blockade and Engumba natives who wished to end it. Coquilhat exploited this situation by joining forces with the Mabale of Engumba. Ten Bongwele natives were captured and kept hostage until the whole situation was resolved. During the night the natives tried to penetrate into Coquilhat's camp throwing spears into the soldiers' huts. One of the natives, a certain Bikoko, fell, hit by a sentinel's bullet. The conflict ended on 31 January with the liberation of all prisoners and the delivery of provisions to the station.²⁹

The natives considered that their local custom had been violated by the Europeans since, in the two cases mentioned above, the whites were the first to attack their blood brothers. What the blacks were seeking by the economic blockade of the station was the recognition of their legitimate rights. This brutal act on the part of the whites did not fail to diminish them in the popularity 'stakes', to use an expression current at that

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 206 and 218-20.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 174-7.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 305-16.

time among their African brothers. 'It wasn't for this that we welcomed the white man,' the natives of Iboko said to Coquilhat.

There were other conflicts with families from outlying districts and not directly tied to the white men by treaties of friendship. In fact certain families who had been 'wronged' by the station men did not hesitate to defend their interests and engage in direct confrontation. Of course these families were not supported by the head chiefs who had welcomed the whites among them and who would have preferred the much more peaceful process of litigation.

The first conflict in the Upper Congo took place in the Bolobo settlement in May 1883. Gatula, from the village of Manga, was responsible for the death of two men from the Ibaka station (read Ebaka) in revenge for an insult to one of his wives lusted after by the Zanzibari soldier-workers. Chief Ibaka had to intervene actively in order to avoid war between Stanley and the inhabitants of Manga. To restore peace the murderer had to pay Stanley a sum of nearly 1,500 *mitako* (brass rods) worth about 1,055 Belgian francs at that time.³⁰

Still at Bolobo, in August 1883 natives from all the villages, with the exception of Mungolo and Lingenji who were both directly answerable to Chief Ibaka, attacked the three boats carrying Stanley and his men on their journey to Stanley Falls. This was the first time an expedition was attacked in the Upper Congo as Stanley himself points out: 'We had only six men aboard, and our rifles had never been used. Arms were taken on board always as a precaution; but during the four years we had run on the Congo not a single native had fired at us. However we soon drew them out and began to return the fire vigorously . . .'³¹ After a few days of hostilities which Stanley does not attempt to explain and which left the natives with two dead and seven wounded, not to mention the boats and canoes destroyed, peace was finally restored on 13 September. The natives who were responsible for having started the war agreed to pay 600 *mitako* as compensation. Chief Ibaka also played a decisive role as peacemaker.³² The fact that all the outlying villages attacked steamers seems rather significant; no doubt they had their grievances against the station men, protected as they were by Ibaka who alone enjoyed all the advantages. Doubtless as a way of celebrating the peace though also by way of compensation for the losses sustained, Stanley gave each of the fifteen chiefs whom he invited to his camp a flag and ten brass rods as well as beer made from sugar cane.³³

There were also conflicts with outlying villages in Mankanza. The Ngombe who resided a considerable distance from the river beyond the Iboko river (direct subjects of Mata-Boike) frequently quarrelled with Coquilhat and his men. The first conflict occurred on 8 July 1884 two months after the opening of the station. Mompata, a prominent Ngombe villager, speared a Zanzibari soldier-worker caught *in flagrante* with one of his wives. Contrary to custom (the guilty soldier could have been sentenced to death or sold as a slave) Coquilhat demanded three goats as compensation for the injured party, threatening war as an alternative. The natives refused to pay the three goats at the 'palaver' and declared they were ready for war. But Mata-Boike exerted all his influence with Mata-Mpopo, the most eminent leader among the Ngombe, to

³⁰ Stanley, *Congo*, vol. 1, pp. 521-3.

³¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 59.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 59-62.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

persuade him to accept the peace on the white man's conditions. Mata-Mpopo therefore on 12 July 1884, in his own name as well as on behalf of the Ngombe, presented two goats, bananas, palm wine, and six chickens. Following a blood-brotherhood ceremony with Coquilhat, Chief Ngombe received a little present the nature of which is not specified.³⁴

The second conflict took place on 30 September 1884. The Ngombe, accused of stealing at the station, rushed at Coquilhat who then lay into one of them. In the slight skirmish that ensued, one of the Ngombe was injured and there was also a great deal of damage as well as some plundering. The Ngombe villages were all set ablaze, lances, drums, and goats were taken off to the station. Mata-Boike openly supported his blood brother this time since the latter had only acted according to local custom. On 2 October peace was restored though the conditions were rather severe on the Ngombe. The offenders, Biangala and Mompata, had to leave the country and go to Bombele, an important Ngombe settlement. The other Ngombe were allowed to rebuild on their former territory but were required to undertake not to disturb the station men any further.³⁵

The Mabale (neighbours from downstream and allies of the Iboko) came into conflict with Coquilhat in September 1884. A certain Ewata, a native of Ilebo (Irebu), who had been staying a few months at Mankanza, was accused of adultery and, in order to flee from the ire of the natives, took up service with Coquilhat. On 15 September Ewata was captured by the Mabale Mata-Ipeko, while carrying out a mission with some other station men. Coquilhat immediately intervened for the release of his man, who risked sentence of death. Negotiations went on for three days with the result that the Mabale decided to attack the station since its leader had infringed on their rights. Hearing of this, Coquilhat attacked first and captured several natives without actually involving himself in a real engagement. Thanks to the intervention of Nyamalembe, the head chief of the Mabale, Ewata was released and the peace restored. As in the case of the two clashes between Coquilhat and the Ngombe, Mata-Boike did not intervene directly in favour of his compatriots.³⁶

All these clashes led the whites to understand that, in order to enjoy peaceful relations with all the natives living in the neighbourhood of the stations, it was absolutely necessary to sign more treaties of friendship (by this we mean making blood alliances) with the chiefs of all the main hamlets. This is what Vangele, head of the equatorial station, managed to do between June 1883 and July 1884 with the chiefs of Wangata, Makoli, Bolokowansamba, Mbandaka, Wetanyenyi, villages located upstream from the station; then also with the chiefs of villages on the banks of the Ruki: Moleke, Montoei and Katankoei and finally with the villages downstream: Bolenge and Moumpanga, not forgetting a village in the interior, Ipeko.³⁷ Coquilhat was to do exactly the same thing in Mankanza between May 1884 and April 1885 by signing treaties with the head chiefs of the Mabale and the Ngombe: Nyamalembe (called Mata-Mopoli) of Limpanza and Mata-Mpopo respectively before going on to fraternize with the chiefs of Motembo (Malunza) and Bogbonza (Ngombe left bank).³⁸

³⁴ Coquilhat, *Haut-Congo*, pp. 222-6.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 258-61.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 251-8. It should be noted that we possess no proof that the natives actually planned to attack the station. What is certain is the fact that for Coquilhat a

surprise attack was the only way of quickly freeing his worker.

³⁷ Van Groenweghe, 'Les Premiers Traités', pp. 185-208.

³⁸ Coquilhat, *Haut-Congo*, pp. 196-242.

To the natives there was nothing out of the ordinary in all these clashes since they happened just as frequently in their relations with the African merchants. Nevertheless there was a certain feeling of disquietude among the natives who were generally helpless against the might of the stations which, however few in number, were by far better equipped from a military point of view. The Africans, unused to continuing a war on a protracted scale, would quickly admit defeat and commence peace negotiations. Despite technical superiority which quickly won them small battles, the Europeans, for their part, were not, however, in a position to assert themselves. That is why, after long palavers, they would agree to pay the compensation demanded by the natives for losses sustained, albeit with some bending of the rules, as mentioned above. In this way, the kinsmen of Chief Ikenge of Wangata and those of Bikoko of Mankanza, the first casualties of the clashes between the blacks and the whites, were compensated by the conqueror-aggressors. The wronged whites, for their part, extracted similar compensation and negotiated peace in the African manner as mentioned above.

Thus by gaining the signature to the treaties of as many chiefs as possible following the blood-brotherhood ritual, the Europeans could rest assured, if not of the land handed over and their rights of sovereignty, then at least of the friendship and fraternity of the chiefs. This would allow them to move freely throughout the region and to fortify their settlements, future operational bases for the virtual conquest of the country.

This friendship which the African chiefs swore on oath during the blood exchange, even if highly self-interested, was no less real and sincere. That is why though the whites stressed the greed of the African chiefs, a greed which was often really an anxiety to reinforce their position against opponents and local enemies, they never failed to mention the fidelity of these same chiefs which helped them in so many critical situations when setting up and developing their stations.

At Kintambo, Chief Ngaliema, who was blood brother to Stanley from March 1877, was clearly harbouring the ambition of becoming a leading commercial power among the Teke living on the southern bank of Pool as a result of the settlement of the whites. This often explains the changes in his character when things seemed not to be going according to his wishes. Nevertheless he proved himself faithful to his commitments by welcoming Stanley with great dignity despite the opposition of the entire region.³⁹

Chief Ibaka of the Bolobo, the most commercial tribe of the middle river, welcomed the white men. It is clear that he was interested in strengthening his position (somewhat contested on account of his formerly having been a slave) by having a European trading post set up in his territory. But Ibaka, the great peacemaker during the clashes between his African brothers and his European blood brothers, had to honour his commitments to the whites.⁴⁰

At Mankanza Mata-Boike was probably the most sincere of all the chiefs and regarded Coquilhat, 'son' of Bula-Matari, as one of his own 'sons'. Before even defending him in almost unconditional manner in all the palavers with his subjects, Mata-Boike had offered Coquilhat a choice of any one of his young wives: this was a

³⁹ Stanley, *Congo*, vol. 1, pp. 319-30.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 522-5, and vol. 2, pp. 61-4.

mark of high esteem and a sacred duty of hospitality among blood brothers.⁴¹ After staying a year at Iboko, Coquilhat, who wished to cultivate maize and rice on a vast scale, was considered a 'son' of the country and received permission from all the chiefs to make use of the land rent-free.⁴²

We should also say that the establishment of friendly and lasting relations depended also on the attitude of the whites towards the African chiefs. In so far as the foreigners endeavoured to respect legitimate authority in all circumstances, as Coquilhat managed to do at Mankanza with regard to Mata-Boike, where between the two blood brothers there flowed a veritable current of sympathy and mutual respect. This was proved at Mankanza when Coquilhat was leaving the country after an uninterrupted stay of fifteen months among the Iboko. The old chief, Mata-Boike, could not restrain his tears and ardently expressed the wish that his adopted son should return before his death. This wish was fulfilled in 1886 just one month before the old chief's demise.

By way of conclusion to this paragraph on the local impact of treaties of friendship, we can affirm that when the European powers met at Berlin to discuss the future of Africa, political relations were limited to being on good terms with all the neighbouring chiefs in the vicinity of the stations. And to ensure the success of such an enterprise, an indispensable requirement was the blood-brotherhood ritual with all the important local chiefs. As a result of this friendship with all the chiefs, thus assuring a certain neutrality throughout the region, the whites sought or were requested to play the role of arbiter among the Africans who were in conflict. This was one of the important stages in the progressive integration of the whites into the social and political life of the Africans. Vangele and Coquilhat rapidly became adept in this domain at Wangata and Mankanza respectively.⁴³

In the name of this same friendship the whites were often requested by the head chiefs, on whose land the stations had been set up, to join sides with them in internal wars. Of course they almost always managed to reject such invitations by only going so far as to promise to defend the hamlets of the chiefs and those of their own settlements. But there were cases where there was some involvement in village affairs such as when Coquilhat supported his chief ally, Mata-Boike, in a clash between the Iboko and the Mabale involving a woman over whom the old chief's son was in dispute with an Engumba tribesman.⁴⁴

We may say in conclusion that, in order to attract the confidence of the blacks, the whites adopted various practices whose usage was traditional among blood brothers: monthly and occasional presents, sugar-cane beer parties, and so on.⁴⁵

Emile Vandervelde summarizes these peaceful relations between blacks and whites in the following terms:

C'est, peut-être, le plus beau moment de l'histoire du Congo léopoldien que ces premières années où l'on fit de si grandes choses avec de si faibles ressources. De vivi aux Stanley Falls, plus de quarante établissements se créent, sans que les représentants de Léopold II ne recourent à d'autres moyens que les cadeaux, ou des rentes mensuelles, en articles de traite, pour obtenir des concessions de territoire.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Coquilhat, *Haut-Congo*, p. 202.

⁴² Ibid., p. 342.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 352; Van Groenweghe, 'Les Premiers Traités', p. 193.

⁴⁴ Coquilhat, *Haut-Congo*, pp. 332-40.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 329; Stanley, *Congo*, vol. 2, pp. 64-5.

⁴⁶ E. Vandervelde, *La Belgique et le Congo*, Paris 1911, p. 19.

It remains to speak of commercial relations, the promise of which was the basis for the goodwill shown by the inhabitants of the interior. It is important to note from the outset that the initial objections of the natives towards the arrival of the Europeans into the interior of the continent related to the question of trading in ivory. The Bakongo and the Bazombo, anxious to retain the enormous advantages which they enjoyed as ivory merchants with the trading posts on the coast or the river estuary and the merchants of Pool, began slandering the whites among the chiefs and merchants of the Bateke. Their argument was simple: the European installations at Pool, both for the downstream traders as well as for the Bateke and Pool traders, meant the end of a lucrative business since in practice it would be impossible to compete with the whites.⁴⁷

We know however that this propaganda against the installation of the whites near the biggest ivory market in Central Africa failed to produce the desired effect. The whites were in fact admitted to Pool by the Bateke traders. We believe that the Bateke merchants, hoping to control European activity in the same way as that of the African traders, were not all that disturbed by the far too alarmist news from the downstream traders. Later the initial activities of the upper river stations convinced the Pool natives that the opposite was true. In fact before and during Conference of Berlin, the whites were mostly concerned in buying provisions for their men and left the trading in ivory in the hands of the Africans.

The chiefs of the interior for their part were unhappy to receive a monthly payment while awaiting other barter the supply of which the whites were always postponing. From 1882 onwards the launching of steamers onto the river did not fail to disquiet the Bateke who after all were merely traders whose business was the direct sale of Bobangi ivory.⁴⁸

It was the same with the Bobangi traders from Bolobo, Lokolela, and Ilebo as resentfully they watched the whites impinge on their source of provision in ivory and slaves. They also tried to compromise the white influence among the Iboko in Mankanza by stressing the negative side of their relations with the downstream blacks.⁴⁹

The attack on Stanley's boats at Bolobo in September 1883 can partly be explained by this campaign of discouragement undertaken by the ivory merchants in the middle river. What they feared in effect was, if not immediate competition, then at least an abundance of European merchandise in the upper river which meant risking a considerable reduction in the price of articles of trade. But here as at Pool the ivory merchants were quickly reassured since the state agents only rarely indulged in the purchase of this main commercial product.⁵⁰

With regard to this Stanley wrote the following on 7 April 1882: 'It would never have paid us to effect any large purposes, as our mission is for a totally different purpose than trade; but, in endeavouring to find the real truth about the state of trade here, we must put it to a practical test.'⁵¹ In so far as trading with the Europeans was limited to provisions and some material for equipping the stations, natives wishing to earn a little

⁴⁷ Stanley, *Congo*, vol. 1, p. 319.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 387-90. 'To be sure, Stanley Pool is a little too far in the interior to have been an obstacle to the trader . . . We found in Ngalyema the rearguard of the congo middlemen—and trouble enough he gave us, as

has been seen.'

⁴⁹ Coquilhat, *Haut-Congo*, pp. 79-82 and 192-215.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 327; Stanley, *Congo*, vol. 1, p. 384.

⁵¹ Stanley, *Congo*, vol. 1, p. 384.

more money would regularly read just the price of provisions according to the law of supply and demand. This was to become another source of tension between the Europeans and their African hosts.⁵²

Other natives, the young in particular, made a little money by sometimes working for the whites. Europeans made use of the natives in various places for purposes such as transporting their merchandise, acquiring building materials and even building houses, and so on. The natives were generally well disposed towards helping them in return for a payment which was sometimes derisory in size, as was required by the local custom of mutual aid.⁵³ Similarly during their journeys to other localities in the vicinity of the stations, the Europeans were accompanied by local guides and paddlers. At the same time as controlling the movements and actions of the whites, these Africans were extremely useful to their peaceful conquerors.

The son of old chief Mata-Boike in Mankanza often formed part of Coquilhat's retinue during these journeys. This helped the white man to get to know the country well from a geographical point of view as well as also acquainting him with the situation of the population from a demographic, political, and economic point of view. These first companions of the whites became the first solidier-workers of the Independent State of the Congo and were called Bangala, only a few months after the Conference of Berlin.⁵⁴

This analysis of the economic situation concludes an outline which intends to show as comprehensively as possible the relations between blacks and whites during the first years of colonization. However there is still a word to be said about another effect of the treaties of friendship and this concerns the role of the blacks in clashes between whites of various nationality.

3. THE ROLE OF THE AFRICANS IN THE AGGRAVATION OF LOCAL CLASHES BETWEEN EUROPEANS OF VARIOUS NATIONALITY

One of the problems which pushed the delegates at the Conference of Berlin to proclaim the neutrality of the Congo basin was doubtless the conflicts between the European powers who disputed their rights to different parts of the country. If, in referring to this, we are referring to something about which Africans were totally unaware, it is simply because their participation in local conflicts showed their fidelity to promises made to their white brothers. In fact for a period of time the blacks rejected all whites of nationalities other than those whose flags they flew.

The main focus of tension between the Africans and different European nationals penetrating to the heart of Africa was the region of Stanley Pool (now Pool Malebo). Brazza, the first European to obtain 'rights of sovereignty' on both sides of Pool, requested his black brothers to repulse all whites who did not carry the French flag. This hostile attitude, particularly directed at the agents of the Study Committee of the Upper Congo, indiscriminately affected all other European nationals, even the French missionaries in 1881.

⁵² Coquilhat, *Haut-Congo*, pp. 229 and 305-6.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 215-16.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 352-3.

The English missionaries, Comber and Bentley, who wanted to settle at Pool in February 1881, were the first to be attacked by the Kinshasa natives who flew the French flag. Despite the repeated intervention of Sergeant Malamine, head of the French post at Kinshasa, who tried to convince the natives that the English missionaries were the brothers of the French, the inhabitants of Kinshasa did not want the missionaries who, according to them, were precisely the bad whites of whom Brazza had spoken. They routed them with gunfire. The missionaries dropped a bale of material which, together with a pair of binoculars, the natives had as booty. One of the carriers accompanying them got lost during the rout. Sergeant Malamine found him emerging from his hiding place and in August 1881 took him to Reverend Father Augouard of the Holy Ghost Fathers. The latter also wished to start a mission at Pool near to the French post.⁵⁵

Stanley was the second victim of this black distrust of non-French Europeans. On arrival at Stanley Pool at the end of July 1881, admittedly six months after the alliance between Brazza and the Bateke, the expedition chief of the Study Committee of the Upper Congo met with strong hostility from the natives of Mfua and Malima on the north bank of Pool. He had to beat a retreat and turn to Ngaliema, chief of Kintambo, his blood brother. The latter, needless to say, tried to hold his own against the whole country who were against the whites settling there. In the end he had to yield to general pressure and send back Stanley's men who were under his protection at Kintambo.⁵⁶

At the same time as Stanley was vainly trying to be admitted into the Pool region, Reverend Father Augouard, a French national, arrived at Pool in search of some land on which he could set up a future missionary station.

No longer in possession of the French flag which he had sent to Sergeant Malamine and which one of the chiefs had preferred to keep for himself, the missionary was also badly received by the people of Mfua. The village chief allowed Father Augouard three or four days to rest before retracing his steps back home since he was not wanted in the country.⁵⁷

Certainly it is difficult to show the role of Sergeant Malamine in this vast swell of general hostility, charged as he was to guard the French post, nor is it easy to show the role of the Bateke which was partly complicated by the ivory traders, Bakongo and Bazombo. Yet one thing is certain: the natives were acting in accordance with an agreement signed with Brazza.

Let us conclude by pointing out that the rejection of whites of other nationality is equally to be found among the International Association of the Congo. Camille Coquilhat points out that the *Peace*, the steamship of the English Baptist missionaries, which was not flying the flag of the AIA, was almost attacked at Mankanza in November 1884. He had to intervene personally in order to disperse the armed natives who were preparing to open fire on the ship.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ W. H. Bentley, *Pioneering on the Congo*, 2 vols., London 1900, vol. 1, pp. 352-5; J. de Witte, *Vie de Monseigneur Augouard: Ses notes de voyage et sa correspondance*, Paris 1924, p. 151.

⁵⁶ Stanley, *Congo*, vol. 1, p. 338-56.

⁵⁷ De Witte, *Augouard*, pp. 148-52, Stanley, *Congo*, vol. 1, p. 348.

⁵⁸ Coquilhat, *Haut-Congo*, p. 299.

CONCLUSION

Such then in the main were the relations between the blacks and the whites in the west of the Zaire basin at the time of the Conference of Berlin. Ill disposed from the outset, the Europeans exploited the economic situation and especially the social traditions which assured them the fidelity of the blacks, in order to lay the foundations for colonial conquest. This then is the real impact of the treaties of friendship between blacks and whites on African soil.

All through the period preceding the great colonial pact of Berlin, the Africans of the Congo basin scarcely believed for a moment that in the future they would be subjugated by the whites who had more or less become perfectly integrated into the social and economic network. The treaties of dependency are nothing more than a legend serving to justify the whites' strategy of domination of the 'primitives'

Crisis and Choice in the Nigerian Emirates: The Decisive Decade, 1897–1906

A. H. M. KIRK-GREENE

INTRODUCTION

Confronted by the creeping consolidation of an alien presence during the last decade of the nineteenth century, and by the positive penetration of a foreign government over the opening years of the twentieth, the traditional rulers of Northern Nigeria's Fulani emirates (referred to in this paper generically as emirs and not by their individual titles of Lamido, Etsu, Mai, and so on) had three options open to them. They could stand and fight, meeting force with force and committing their own armies to battle. They could turn to flight, in search of some safe asylum. Or they could decide to unite, negotiating an accommodationist *modus vivendi* with the new rulers and effecting some kind of peaceful coexistence.

This paper sets out to consider in detail the implementation of the three styles of emirate reaction to the British presence, first commercial then Crown in Northern Nigeria around the turn of the century; to comment summarily on the outcome of those diverse responses; and in conclusion to suggest that this crucial decision-making by the traditional rulers was in no way a one-off crisis but that, on the contrary, their leadership role throughout the ensuing eighty years has been characterized by a positive continuity of crisis and choice.

Perhaps because the British penetration was piecemeal, both in type of agents and in chronology, little concerted response emerged among the emirs. Even had there been no internal antagonisms and schisms, it seems likely that a single, identifiable invasion of the Sokoto Caliphate would have generated a single, united emirate resistance. In the event, the occupation—and the resistance thereto—can be described as essentially taking place in the emirates between 1897, when Royal Niger Company troops stormed the emirate capitals of Bida and Ilorin, and 1906, when the final instances of fierce armed resistance in the Hausa/Fulani states took place at Satiru and Hadejia. Thereafter the moment of danger—and a very grave one it had been—for the British administration could be seen to have passed. Troops were never again committed during the colonial period in aid of the civil power in the core emirates. Such patrols as were sanctioned in the Northern Provinces¹ after 1906 were predominantly in the non-emirate, peripheral areas such as Chibbuk (1906), Sura and Kagoro (1908), Madagali and Chamba (1920) or else were confined to police operations, such as Verre (1947),

¹ The situation was different in the Southern Provinces, the most notable latter-day involvement of the military being the deployment of 3,000 troops under 70 British officers at Abeokuta in 1918. See H. A. Galley, *Lugard and the Abeokuta Uprising*, London 1982, and the widespread use of troops during the Aba riots of 1929, cf. *Report of the Aba Commission of Inquiry*, Lagos 1930.

Madagali (1954), Tiv (1959). Their role in the Kano riots of 1953 was one of deployment, not committal. It was to require the Kano riots of 1980, twenty years after independence, with artillery bombardment, air strikes, and 4,000 deaths, and in 1984 the intervention by the military in the capital of Gongola State, to break the emirate record. From 1906, however, occupation and its reverse face of resistance gave way to consolidation and its complement of collaboration.

The year 1906 was indeed a turning point: not only did it mark the end of the years of armed confrontation by the emirates, at Satiru and again Hadejia, but in the circulation of 'Political Memoranda'² it also saw the systemization of official instructions for the conduct of indirect rule, the epitome of emirate collaboration. The scene was now set for what turned out to be fifty years of an Anglo-Fulani treaty of co-operation, exemplified in that consciously gradualist³ and non-interventionist policy which became the hallmark of Britain's administration of the Nigerian emirates, indirect rule: a system based on the triple imperatives of supporting the authority of the chiefs, utilizing and improving the existing machinery, and eschewing the 'obvious folly of attempting any drastic reform which would cause a dislocation of methods which have the sanction of traditional usage and are acquiesced in by the people'.⁴

1. 1825-1885: 'NOTHING BUT A SLAVE OF THE SULTAN OF SOKOTO.'

In Northern Nigeria, two common features of nineteenth-century imperialism are revealed at their most conspicuous: the flag followed trade, and the initial commercial thrust to the hinterland was up river. Both phenomena, of course, were to be matters of major concern to the subsequent Berlin West Africa Conference. The British government *qua* a colonial administration did not come onto the scene till 1900, seventy-five and fifty years respectively after Mr Tyrwhitt and Dr Barth, the first 'commercial travellers', as it were, had sought to establish a British trading consulate at Lake Chad⁵ and again, in Barth's case, with the kingdom of Fombina, the south-eastern outpost of the Sokoto Caliphate and the 'remotest corner of the earth',⁶ and fifteen years after the Royal Niger Company had commissioned Joseph Thomson to negotiate a treaty to establish commercial relations with Sokoto itself.

But in an empire endowed with such rudimentary communications as the Sokoto one, diplomatic practice could comfortably indulge in the time-honoured cunctatory art. Regrettably, Mohammed Lawal, the emir of Yola, told Barth when he presented his credentials as 'the first European who had ever visited his country with the distinct purpose to enter into friendly relations with him',⁷ the good doctor did not have quite the right documentation. But if the distinguished *tubib* would care to travel to Sokoto, some three months' march to the west, and then bring back a letter from Lawal's liege

² Lugard's *Instructions to Political Officers on Subjects Chiefly Political and Administrative* (1906) were revised in 1919 as *Political Memoranda*. The first public edition was not made available for another fifty years (London 1970).

³ 'Festina lente is a motto very applicable to Africa'—Lugard, *Political Memorandum* no. 1, par. 5.

⁴ *Political Memorandum* no. 9, par. 5.

⁵ See E. W. Bovill (ed.), *Mission to the Niger: The Bornu*

Mission, 1822-1825, 3 vols., Cambridge 1965-6; A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, 'The British Consulate at Lake Chad', in *African Affairs*, Oct. 1959, pp. 334-9.

⁶ The description is that of one of the messengers of the Lamido of Adamawa, conveyed to Barth on his visit to Yola in 1851—quoted in A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, *Barth's Travels in Nigeria*, London 1962, p. 196.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

lord (for he himself was 'nothing but a slave of the Sultan of Sokoto'), then assuredly the emir 'would receive me with open arms, would converse with me about all our science and about our instruments without reserve, and would show me the whole country'.⁸ Thirty-five years later, Joseph Thomson did indeed succeed in having the seal of the Sokoto empire affixed to the Royal Niger Company treaty, with an identical protocol signed by the emir of Gwandu.⁹ But in practical terms that was pretty well the end of the matter, and the necessary revised commercial agreements with the two senior emirates in 1890 negotiated by the West Indian agent David King transferred no sovereignty to the company. By politely but plainly rebuffing these approaches or simply failing to implement any treaties assumed to have been 'agreed', the caliphate made it clear that not only did they want as little as possible to do with consuls and commerce, they also knew perfectly well how to preserve their independence: the skilled invocation of the firman was just as effective as the brute resort to firearms.

2. 1885-1896: 'WE CAN DO NOTHING BUT GO OR STAY AS HE SAYS.'

The next phase of the emirates' defence of their homeland against foreign incursion was conspicuously played out on the international waterway of the River Benue. First the Germans, in the persons of Flegel and Zintgraff in the 1880s and in the 1890s of Morgen representing a consortium of Hamburg firms, and then von Uchtritz, on behalf of the *Kolonialgesellschaft*, sought to win trading concessions from Zubeiru, emir of Yola. Next it was the French who tried to establish a trading post at Yola, first through the efforts of Maistre and then, in an exciting episode which still awaits its full-length chronicler of such a dramatic instance of the inflated importance of the periphery to the metropole during the late nineteenth-century expansion of European empires in Africa, through the *affaire Mizon*. Zubeiru's neighbour, Muhammadu Nya, emir of Muri, showed himself more accommodating, especially when Mizon offered to lend him his Senegalese sharpshooters and two pieces of field-cannon for the emir's slave-raiding attacks on stubborn Kona, and in November 1892 Mizon was able to declare on paper the establishment of a 'French Protectorate of Muri'.

This was Fulani diplomacy with a vengeance, for had not the emir of Muri concluded a treaty with the Royal Niger Company in 1885, its first success on the upper Benue? The plodding renegotiation of the commercial treaty with Muri in 1895, with the emir's repeated demand for 'no interference' and his underlying message to the company that they 'must do what *he* says is good and leave what *he* dislikes',¹⁰ and the prolonged stormy relationship at Yola between the company's agents and the unpredictable Zubeiru, who despite separate treaties in 1893 and again in 1897, blew hot and cold over whether to restrict trading in the hulk tied up in midstream or allow a factory to be opened on shore, together offer a clear and colourful picture of the successful tactics of emirate resistance to commercial blandishments. Today Zubeiru's

⁸ Ibid., p. 195.

⁹ See R. I. Rotberg, *Joseph Thomson and the Exploration of Africa*, London 1971, pp. 222-3. John Flint entertains doubts over the existence of these treaties (personal communication).

¹⁰ From the manuscript diary of W. P. Hewby, the Company's chief agent on the Benue, dated 13 June 1895, quoted in A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, *Adamawa Past and Present*, London 1958, pp. 45-7.

conduct is interpreted as much as a matter of resistance pride to Nigerians¹¹ as it was a matter of shareholders' irritation to Goldie and of frustration and resignation to Messrs Wallace and Hewby *in situ* at Yola. 'We can do nothing', the latter reported of Zubeiru, 'but go or stay as he says.'¹²

3. 1897: 'THE EMIR WILL OBEY ALL SUCH DIRECTIONS AS THE COMPANY MAY GIVE HIM.'

Such was the level of concern of the Royal Niger Company over the response of the emirs, at the best evasiveness or obdurate non-cooperation, at the worst rejection or open hostility, that in 1896 Goldie decided to make it clear once and for all what in his opinion treaties must mean.

An example was to be made of the Nupe emirate. Here the Emir, Abubakar, had shown himself a resolute enemy of the European traders, the very antithesis of his famous father, Masaba, who had been a notable collaborator in the river commerce along the lower Niger, all the way from Raba down to Lokoja. Bida fell, after a short and one-sided battle. Then recalcitrant Ilorin was subjected to the same fate.¹³ The emirs fled, more pliant successors were installed, and new treaties were drafted and ratified. In sum, the emirates of Bida and Ilorin had been reduced to the status of Royal Niger Company vassals: 'The Emir Suliman recognises that Ilorin is entirely under the protection and power of the Company . . . he will obey all such directions in respect of his government as the Company may give him from time to time.'¹⁴

4. 1900: 'I WILL HAVE NOTHING EVER TO DO WITH YOU.'

Even though the Royal Niger Company, which under its charter of 1886 was permitted to raise a standing army—euphemistically described as a Constabulary—had resorted to armed force in order to bring the uncooperative emirs of Bida, Ilorin, and Wase to heel, and along the Benue had had a rough ride with the emirs of Yola and Muri, none of these emirates made up the core of the Sokoto Caliphate. The sole venture there, Joseph Thomson's treaty of 1886 and its 1890 renegotiation, had in the event been worth little more than the paper it was written on. In sum, the company's writ did not run in the Caliphate proper, while in the outlying emirates it was valid for no more

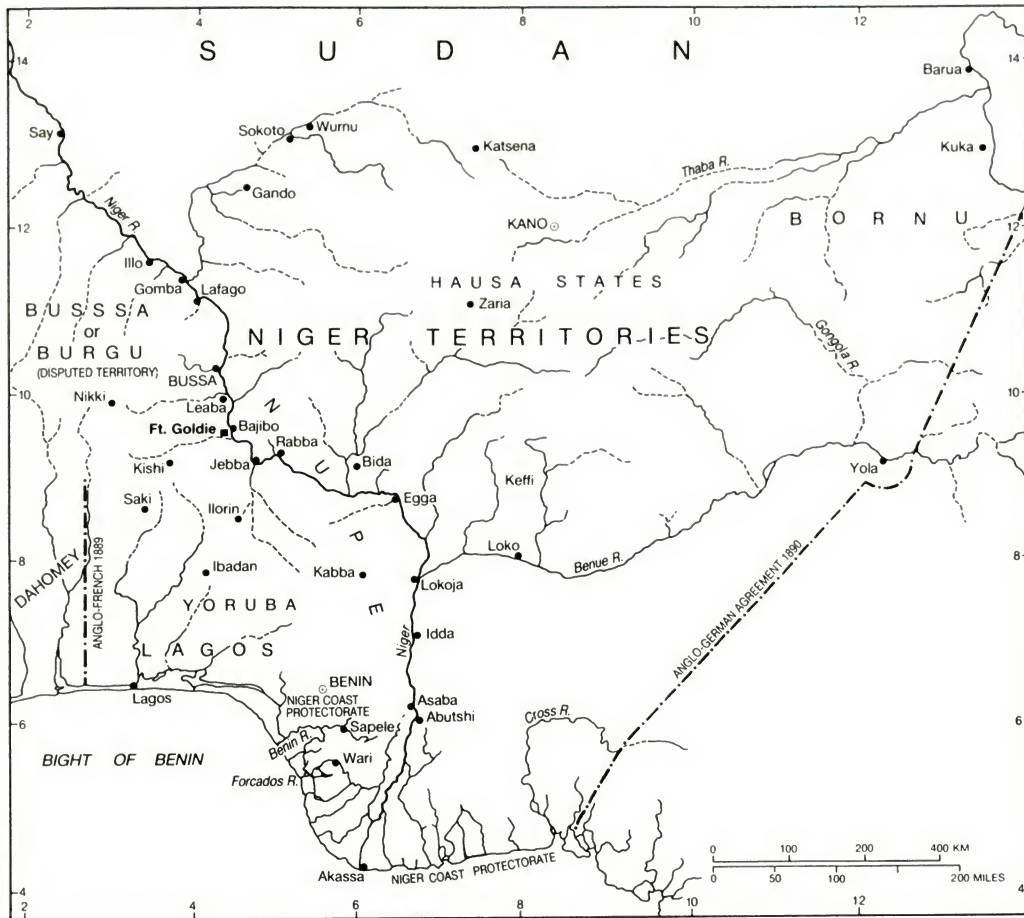
¹¹ e.g. S. Abubakar, *The Lamibe of Fombina*, Zaria 1977; M. Z. Njeuma, *Fulani Hegemony in Yola (Old Adamawa)*, 1809-1902, Yaounde 1978; Federal Department of Information, *A Brief History of Nigeria*, Lagos 1984, p. 18.

¹² Hewby, *op. cit.*, in: Kirk-Greene, *Adamawa*, p. 49.

¹³ The best accounts of the 1897 campaign are in S. Vandeleur, *Campaigning on the Upper Nile and Niger*, London 1898; J. E. Flint, *Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria*, London 1960; and A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, 'The Niger Sudan Expeditionary Force of 1897', in *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 46 (Spring 1968), pp. 49-56. I also have in my possession the personal press cutting book and photograph album

(1897) of Major A. J. Arnold, Commander of the Niger Sudan Expeditionary Force (on loan to Rhodes House Library, Oxford). Flint's study is, of course, indispensable for a study of the link between the Berlin West Africa Conference and British expansion in Nigeria (esp. ch. 4, 'Berlin and the Charter'). See also A. I. Asiwaju, *Partitioned Africans: Ethnic Relations across Africa's International Boundaries, 1884-1984*, London 1985.

¹⁴ The Ilorin treaty, dated 18 February 1897, is reproduced in S. G. Hogben and A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, *The Emirates of Northern Nigeria*, London 1966, p. 300. A copy of the Bida treaty used to hang in the emir's palace, at least up to 1954.



MAP 27.1. Territories of the Royal Niger Company, 1897

Source: Seymour Vandeleur, *Campaigning on the Upper Nile and Niger*, London 1898.

than 'a distance of ten hours journey inland' from the Niger and Benue rivers.¹⁵ The Hausa heartland had kept itself inviolate from commerce, Christianity, and Crown alike.¹⁶ True, the British government had established a West African Frontier Force in 1897,¹⁷ but its headquarters were at Lokoja, a British consular base for fifty years and

¹⁵ This was the limit specified in the treaty with the emir of Gwandu, Rotberg, *Joseph Thomson*, p. 223.

¹⁶ The Reverend Charles Henry Robinson of the Hausa Association did not reach Kano until the end of 1894. He was allowed only a very short sojourn there before being ordered out by the emir. On the activities of that society, see A. Porter, 'The Hausa Association: Sir George Goldie, the Bishop of Dover, and the Niger in the 1890s', in *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 7 (1978), pp. 149-79.

¹⁷ On WAFF sources, see A. H. W. Haywood and F. A. S. Clarke, *A History of the Royal West African Frontier Force*, Aldershot 1965; S. C. Ukpabi, 'The West African Frontier Force: An Instrument of Imperial Policy', unpublished thesis, University of Birmingham, 1964; H. A. J. W. Stacpooler, *A Short Historical Background of the Nigerian Military Forces*, Lagos 1959; and the survey of the extensive manuscript sources in the Nigeria Regimental Museum, Zaria, by the present writer in *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 3 (1965),

five hundred miles away from suspicious Sokoto. Nor was the WAFF role primarily designed as a threat to the Caliphate. Rather was it to checkmate French expansionism, as well as perhaps to prevent the impetuous Goldie from involving Britain in a tangle with France now that the French were capitalizing on their declaration of a protectorate over Dahomey and thus able to expand northwards to the upper Niger. The Anglo-French 'cold war' was not located in Africa (Fashoda was still a year away), but the wish and the will to overthrow the politically strong if economically weak Sokoto Caliphate needed the military instincts of a Lugard. For that, Nigeria had to wait another six years.

Yet already the pattern of emirate response to external threats was taking shape. In their association with the would-be trading firm of the Royal Niger Company, the emirs had shown themselves as flexible in their relations as they were inconsistent in their response. The emirs of Bida and of Ilorin in 1897 and of Wase in 1898 had resisted and had paid the humiliating price of defeat and deposition or death. The emirs of Yola and Muri had vacillated, first resisting, next collaborating, then turning hostile; but at least they had retained their thrones.

It was, one can argue, 1897 that changed all this. With the Nupe forces routed in a pitched battle at Bida and the emir of Ilorin's palace set ablaze by an artillery bombardment, the Sokoto Caliphate needed neither proof nor prescience to perceive that the enemy was verily at the gate. Now was the moment for the Fulani emirs to rally, to raise their standards, and to issue the call to arms in the name of the true religion.

Towards the end of 1897 Abdurrahman, Sultan of Sokoto, in his capacity as the Commander of the Faithful (variously Hausa: *Sarkin Musulmi*; Fulani: *Lamido Julbe*; Arabic: *Amir al-Muminin*) sent a letter to his lieutenant in Yola. 'You have seen what the Company has done to Bida and Ilorin—my territory,' it read. 'You are not to allow the Company to remain in any part of the country over which you have jurisdiction.'¹⁸ A similar letter calling for the expulsion of the Company's agents was sent to the emir of Muri. Again, 'Praise be to Allah and thanks be to him for the defeat of their plans and bringing to naught of the wickedness of the Christians,' wrote the emir of Gwandu to his liege lord at Sokoto. 'We have seen what you forbid and the order which you have given about closing the road to them from entering the land of the Moslems and preventing them from coming to us and you.'¹⁹

By the end of 1897, then, rumours and the alarms of war polluted the emirate air. The infidels could no longer be kept at arm's length by either diplomacy or duplicity. The occupation of Hausaland had suddenly become a grim reality. 'From us to you', ran the letter from the Sultan of Sokoto to the British High Commissioner soon after Lugard's arrival. 'I do not consent that any one of you should ever dwell with us. I will never agree with you. Between us and you there are no dealings except as between Mussulmans and Unbelievers—war, as God Almighty has enjoined on us. I will have nothing ever to do with you.'²⁰

pp. 129-47, including a full set of the Force Standing Orders, 1897-9.

¹⁸ Quoted in Kirk-Greene, *Adamawa*, p. 99.

¹⁹ Quoted in H. F. Backwell, *The Occupation of*

Hausaland, 1900-1904, Lagos 1927, Letter no. 10. This is a valuable collection of some one hundred and thirty emirate letters, translated from Arabic, found in the house of the Waziri of Sokoto soon after the capture of the town by Lugard in 1903.

²⁰ Blackwell, *The Occupation*, p. 13.

It is now time to examine in detail the emirs' three options: to challenge, to concede, or to co-operate.

5. THE CRISIS AND THE EMIRS' OPTIONS, 1900-1906

5.1. *To challenge: 'We do not invite your administration'*

Among the most notable instances of resistance to the British invading forces were the encounters associated with the capture of Kano, Sokoto, Yola, Kontagora, and Abuja during the emirates campaign of 1900-3. The first two, while neither constituted a major battle, are well enough known engagements to relieve us of any need to rehearse them here.²¹ Not only did Sokoto provide the spectacle of 15,000 Fulani cavalry drawn up to defend the city, including groups of *Sikirri* or those vowed to die,²² on the famous *hurumi* grazing ground outside the city on 15 March (a date subsequently and significantly chosen by the Premier of Northern Nigeria to be the North's self-government day),²³ but also, on their way up from Kano, a Mounted Infantry patrol from the main column became involved in a remarkable encounter with 3,000 troops under Waziri Ahmadu trying to force his way back to Kano. Here Captain Wright won the VC, a measure of the ferocity of the engagement. The battle-that-never-was at Kano remains more controversial than the brave but brief resistance at Sokoto, and contemporary emirate historians have challenged Lugard's attribution of cowardice to Emir Aliyu.²⁴ Despite their much lower profile in the campaign annals, neither the Yola nor the Gombe (Malam Jibrilla) battle was by any stretch of the imagination a minor affair. Locally, a pall of suspicion still hangs over the question whether the emir's palago and the mosque at Yola were not set alight deliberately by the WAFF gunners. Bauchi, over which emirate the Sultan had delivered an ultimatum to Lugard, 'We do not invite your administration in the country of Bauchi: you have your religion and we have ours, and if you have interfered we do not want support from anyone save Allah,'²⁵ wisely allowed valour to yield to discretion once its leaders saw the scale of Colonel Morland's column, but stiff resistance was offered to the British forces at Kontagora, where the official report spoke of how 'the Fulani horsemen suffered very heavily', and at Abuja, where 'resistance was broken down' and the emir was killed defending his capital.²⁶

Initial resistance in the emirates did, however, take other forms than a pitched battle. One alternative was the assassination of the British Resident. Here the *cause*

²¹ They are best followed in Lugard's *Annual Report on Northern Nigeria, 1902* (no. 409); in D. J. M. Muffet's detailed account of the Kano-Sokoto campaigns, *Concerning Brave Captains*, London 1964; and in F. P. Crozier's somewhat sadistic memoir *Five Years Hard*, London 1932. The last named was withdrawn from circulation in the Kaduna public library in the mid-1950s, after the offensive photograph at p. 150 had been defaced. See also the documents in J. U. J. Asiegbu, *Nigeria and its British Invaders*, New York 1984.

²² There are Colonel Morland's 'fanatics'. General

Kemball's dispatch was considered important enough to be published in the *London Gazette*, no. 25,782. See also *Northern Nigeria: Further Correspondence relating to Kano*, Cd. 1433, 1903.

²³ 'We chose 15 March as it was the anniversary of the skirmish outside Sokoto between Lugard's troops and the Sultan's men'—Sir A. Bello, *My Life*, Cambridge 1962, p. 223.

²⁴ See Hogben and Kirk-Greene, *The Emirates*, p. 205 n.

²⁵ Blackwell, *The Occupation*, p. 14.

²⁶ Lugard, *Annual Reports, 1900-1901*, p. 12 and 1902, p. 69.

célèbre is the murder of Captain Moloney at Keffi in 1902²⁷ (the later murders of District Officers Carnegie, Barlow, and Maltby are not strictly comparable). Another was the deliberate flouting of the law forbidding slave-raiding, which went so far as to be indulged in by one Fulani District Head with impunity for almost thirty years of German, French, and British administration.²⁸ Other forms of resistance, such as tax protest, labour unrest, land disputes, urban riots, and nationalism, belong to a later period of emirate administration.

But it was 1906 which brought about two mainstream manifestations of resistance in the emirates, both offering, in Crowder's terse phrase, 'a touchy moment for British imperialism in Northern Nigeria'.²⁹ One is the well-publicized Satiru 'bolt from the blue', of mid-February when two District Officers, a subaltern, and half a company of troops were killed and the Maxim gun captured.³⁰ The other is the curiously muted incident at Hadejia in April when, after no less than five hours' hand-to-hand street-fighting, the palace was captured. Here the emir and three of his sons made a gallant stand and died fighting.³¹ Like the Moloney murder at Keffi, neither the Satiru nor the Hadejia affair has yet been fully explored or adequately explained, and all three of these demonstrations of determined resistance remain a challenge to modern emirate historians.

5.2. *To concede: 'Leave and follow me to a new country'*

This, the 'Hegira option', is the least recognized of the three choices facing the emirs, yet recourse to retreat was by no means uncommon in 1901-3. In Yola, for instance, Emir Zubeiru rode out of the town as soon as the British column stormed the palace. Refusing to listen to the promises made by Wallace's messengers, who had caught up with him when the swollen Beti river forced him to return to Seboire, he spent the whole of the next year on the run in the mountainous district between Gurin and Marua. During that time he smuggled letters into Yola which were read out in the mosque. 'I shall return and we will drive out the heathen,' one of them read. 'The Koran forbids you to sit down with the heathen. The heathens wish to obtain our kingdom, have no dealings with them.'³² Zubeiru is also credited with having been behind the attempted assassination of the German Resident at Marua in 1902. In 1903 he eluded a British

²⁷ See Muffett, *Concerning Captains*, ch. 5. The inscription on Moloney's grave in Keffi was subsequently altered from 'murdered in the fearless execution of his duty' to simply 'killed in action'.

²⁸ I first came across the secret file containing the translation of this official's diary of the 1920s when I was working in the Yola in 1951, and still have my field notes taken from it.

²⁹ M. Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria*, London 1962, p. 222. In her biography of Lugard (vol. 2, London 1960), Margery Perham entitles the relevant chapter 'Crisis in Sokoto'. The official index on Lugard's collected annual reports significantly lists the event as 'Satiru, disaster at'.

³⁰ The description is Lugard's own. On Satiru, see R. A. Adeleye, *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria, 1804-1906: The Sokoto Caliphate and its Enemies*, London

1971, ch. 10; T. Büttner, 'Social Aims and Earlier Anti-Colonial Struggles: The Satiru Rising of 1906', in T. Büttner and G. Brehme (eds.), *African Studies*, Berlin 1973, pp. 1-18; *Annual Report for Northern Nigeria, 1905-1906*, no. 516, paras. 18-29; and the article 'The Struggle at Satiru' by M. J. Campbell, in *West African Review*, Aug. 1958, pp. 99-101. For many years the captured Maxim gun was on display in the Regimental Museum at Zaria, at least up to 1965.

³¹ For the British side of the affair, see Lugard's *Annual Report for Northern Nigeria, 1905-1906*, no. 516, paras. 39-42, and *Northern Nigeria: Correspondence relating to Sokoto, Hadejia and the Munshi Country*. Cd. 3620, 1907. Cf. O. Ikime, *The Fall of Nigeria*, London 1977, and Perham, *Lugard*, p. 262. The Emir's sword is now the Royal Fusiliers Regimental Museum, London.

³² Quoted in Kirk-Greene, *Adamawa*, p. 59.

patrol sent out to surprise him near Song, but soon after he was killed. Further well documented examples of flight by emirate notables include those by Aliyu, the emir of Kano, who set out for Sokoto along with 2,000 of his horsemen on the very eve of the British attack on his capital;³³ Ibrahim, emir of Kontagora, whose capture by Captain Abadie was so graphically described by eye-witness Walter Miller;³⁴ and Dan Ya Musa, Magajin Keffi, wanted in connection with Moloney's murder.

But there is retreat and there is withdrawal. By far the most spectacular and significant instance of hegira as the preferred emirate response, and one celebrated in the Fulani annals of the British occupation as the *Perol* or 'flight from the infidel', is the odyssey of Sultan Attahiru of Sokoto. In the eyes of many Fulani, a withdrawal to the holy East has the historical sanction of Usman Dan Fodio himself. His prediction was subsequently revealed by his son Abubakar Atiku (Sultan of Sokoto, 1837-42) and his gifted daughter Nana Mariam, who is on record as having told the emir of Kano, when he enquired about the prophecy, that 'It is better to remain where you are in spite of other longings . . . The Shehu stated that we should migrate from Hausaland but he did not decree the time . . . He only defined the *hijira* for us.'³⁵ In brief, after his defeat at Sokoto in March 1903, the Sultan Attahiru, accompanied by the ex-emirs of Bida and of Misau, the fugitive Magajin Keffi, and a large number of important people from the occupied western and central emirates, decided to emulate the classical hegira and seek shelter from the British attack by fleeing to Mecca, some 2,000 miles away across the Sahel. By May, with the aptly named Captain Sword in hot pursuit, they had reached Burmi in Gombe emirate. There they learned that the principal pilgrimage route to Mecca via Lake Chad was barred: by the French in the north, by the Germans at Dikwa in the south, and by the British in pursuit of Rabeh's son, Fad-El-Allah, beteen Gombe and Gujba (where he was soon to be tracked down and killed) to the south-west of the Chad route.³⁶ So Attahiru and his force turned about and in late July stood their ground by Bima hill at Burmi. The battle that ensued was one of the fiercest of the emirates campaign. Casualties were heavy on both sides and at the end of the day both commanders, Sultan Attahiru and Major Marsh, lay dead on the field. While for the British Burmi was generally looked on as the just end of, to borrow a subsequent phrase from Nigerian autobiography, a 'fugitive offender', for Nigerian patriots it was not so much the finale as another stage in the process of emirate response to the British occupation. Indeed, the legend of the Sultan's missing flag kept the memory of Burmi alive till the end of the colonial period.³⁷ The emir of Misau and the

³³ General C. H. Foulke's unpublished diary of his part in the capture of the fugitive emir of Kano formed the basis of an article in *West African Review*, Sept. 1957 and is quoted in Hogben and Kirk-Greene, *The Emirates*, pp. 205-6.

³⁴ W. Miller, *Reflections of a Pioneer*, Zaria 1936, pp. 77-80.

³⁵ See Muffett, *Concerning Captains*, p. 147.

³⁶ The excellent War Office Intelligence Division map of 'The Sultan's Retreat to Burmi and Captain Sword's Pursuit to Bauchi' is reproduced in Muffett, *Concerning Captains*, facing p. 163. See also Asiegbu, *Nigeria*, pp. 218 ff.

³⁷ The battle of Burmi is described at length in Muffett, *Concerning Captains*, Part II; in Adeleye, *Power and*

Diplomacy, ch. 10; and in ch. 9 of the Hausa auto-biography of Mai Maina, Chief of Askira, published in Zaria in 1958 and translated into English with historical notes as Part II of *West African Travels and Adventures*, ed. A. H. M. Kirk-Greene and P. Newman, New Haven 1971 (see especially pp. 185-92). C. L. Temple's report to Lugard dated 8 Aug. 1903 (a fortnight after the battle) in the National Archives at Kaduna is also an important document (SNP 10/2A/5). On the saga of the Sultan's flag, see also Bello, *My Life*, p. 1; Crozier, *Five Years*, pp. 150-5; Hogben and Kirk-Greene, *The Emirates*, p. 470; Haywood and Clark, *History of the RWAFF*, p. 47; and the programme 'Return of the Flag of Sultan Attahiru' printed locally for the ceremony held at Sokoto on 6 Nov. 1960, along with the photograph in Muffett,

Sultan's son Mai Wurno escaped and did indeed reach Mecca, while a large number of his followers (said to have exceeded 25,000) stopped in the Sudan and in 1906 established the Fellata settlement of Shehutalha near Senaar on the banks of the Nile.³⁸

While the bloody battle of Burmi ended the most conspicuous manifestation of the *Perol* option, retreat to the holy city of Mecca, it is not the only one.³⁹ We have seen how this hegira option was adopted by the ex-Emirs of Misau and Bida. Flight to Mecca had also been the instinct of the people of several of the smaller north-eastern emirates such as Jama'are as soon as the British had appeared on the scene. We know, too, that the emir of Yola had, during his fugitive days in the Adamawa mountains a whole year earlier, sent a letter to his supporters in occupied Yola, urging them that 'if the heathen prove too strong, leave and follow me to a new country'.⁴⁰ While historians have generally looked on this as referring to the 'French' territory around Marua, in the light of the contemporaneous decision of the Sultan to try and reach Mecca it may well have carried similar overtones of a *Perol*-style exodus.

Above all, there is in existence a letter from Aliyu, emir of Kano to Buhari, the blind and noble Waziri of Sokoto, probably written about the time Lugard was assembling his column at Zaria for the emirates campaign of the dry season of 1902-3. In it the emir significantly talks of how 'both we and you seek for a plan which will be of assistance to our religion and to earth and heaven'.⁴¹ He went on: 'I have found no more useful plan for all Moslems than . . . that we leave this country, all of us, as these dogs have surrounded us and threaten to overcome us.' The emir of Kano concluded his appeal to Sokoto with the invocation, 'May Allah grant that your eyes are opened speedily.' Soon after this letter was received in Sokoto, the Sultan's son Muhammadu Marafa (who became Sultan in 1915), on hearing of the proposed *Perol*, urged on his father the need to keep any such plan utterly secret, else the emirate morale would collapse. 'I earnestly beseech you', he wrote, 'in God's name let no one hear a suggestion of our departure from your mouth in this land. This would mean ruin for our affairs. Our subjects and people would assuredly throw off their allegiance on hearing such news.'⁴² Marafa's advice was 'to sit and wait the issue of the matter'. In

Concerning Captains, facing p. 193. Crozier believes that the Sultan held the trump card against the British, first by the religious undertones of his flight and stand at Burmi, second by his astute tactics, and third by the disappearance of the sacred green flag which had been wrapped round his body—Crozier, *Five Years*, pp. 154-5.

³⁸ See S. Biobaku and M. Al-Hajj, 'The Sudanese Mahdiyya and the Niger Chad Region', in: I. M. Lewis (ed.), *Islam in Tropical Africa*, London 1966, pp. 226-31, p. 236. See also J. Birks, *Across the Savannas to Mecca*, London 1978, and M. R. Duffield, *Maiurno: Capitalism and Rural Life in the Sudan*, New Haven 1981. For a clear indication of how this immigration was seen as a matter of continuing concern to the authorities in Khartoum, see the new political history of the Sudan by Dr Martin Daly, *Empire on the Nile*, Cambridge 1986.

³⁹ For further discussion of the hegira of Sultan Attahiru I, see H. A. S. Johnston, *The Fulani Empire of Sokoto*, London 1967, 'Epilogue'; Adeleye, *Power and Diplomacy*, chs. 9 and 10; A. M. Fika, *The Kano Civil War*

and *British Over-rule, 1882-1940*, Ibadan 1978, pp. 98-101; CO 446/31, with its important enclosures from the field; and A. O. Anjorin's unpublished thesis 'The British Occupation and Development of Northern Nigeria', University of London, 1965. An excellent discussion of the Muslim orthodoxy on what I have called the 'hegira option' is R. A. Adeleye, 'The Dilemma of the Waziri', *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 4 (1968), pp. 285-311. See also M. Khadduri's classic study, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*, London 1965.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Kirk-Greene, *Adamawa*, p. 59. The concept of the crucial choice faced by the emirs in 1900-3, to migrate or to submit to the British invaders, is enshrined in a well-known couplet of contemporary Hausa verse,

*Cikin biyu sai a zabi guda a dauka
Walau tashi walau a bi Anasara.*

I am grateful to Alhaji Shehu Malami, Sarjin Sudan, for this quotation.

⁴¹ Blackwell, *Occupation*, letter no. 125.

⁴² *Ibid.*, letter no. 128.

the end all this counsel proved too late: first Kano fell, then a month later Sokoto. The rumoured prophecy that the Fulani empire would come to an end one hundred years after Usman Dan Fodio's decisive victory over the Habe forces at Lake Kwotto in June 1804 seemed to be realized in the battle of Burmi and the death of Shehu's great-grandson, Sultan Attahiru, in July 1903. Yet, as we have seen, the seed of the *Perol* option had taken root: the rainy season of 1903 brought it to a noble flowering.

5.3. *To co-operate: 'There are not two sets of rulers—British and Native—but a single Government'*

Not unexpectedly, given the odds against successful confrontation and the obstacles in the way of a viable hegira to the holy land, collaboration became the preferred option of the emirates. A few, in police parlance, came quietly and offered no resistance: for instance, the emirs of Gwandu, Bauchi, and Katsina, the last named overruling the war party in his Council and, after deciding not to ambush and assassinate Lugard,⁴³ riding out to welcome him in person at the Yandaka gate. Others were quickly installed to replace their exiled predecessors, like Muhammadu Abbas, brother of the fugitive Emir Aliyu, who at once hurried to Kano to make submission and received Lugard's prompt recognition, or Muhammadu Mafindi, emir of Muri, who instantly read the message in the crushing of his neighbour the emir of Yola and within weeks was acting as personal escort to the new Residents. One by one the emirs followed the lead of the emir of Nassarawa, who had been the first (and the nearest to Lugard's initial headquarters at Lokoja) to submit, in 1900, and had been duly rewarded with the recognition of his minor kingdom as a full-scale British administrative province, at the expense of the senior but disgraced emirate of Keffi.

What form this new concept of collaboration was to take was spelt out by Lugard himself at Sokoto, the capital of the caliphate, six days after the defeat of the Sokoto army in 1903. Opening with the memorable words, 'The old treaties are dead, you have killed them (*alkawuran da-dai yanzu duk sun mutu ke nan*)', he went on to establish the basic principles which were later to be formulated as the basis of the colonial administrative policy known as Indirect Rule, in turn subsequently systematized into the practice of Native Administration. The message was unambiguous: in a sentence, 'The right to rule, to levy taxes, to depose kings and to create kings . . . all these things now pass to the British.'⁴⁴ Those who could not accept this new form of government had to go. Recalcitrant emirs were deposed and exiled (often to distant Lokoja, noisomely low-lying on the confluence). Lugard entertained little hope of reform among the present rulers, used to other ways and other days: 'It is', he argued, 'from the rising generation that we must hope to produce the elements of real progress and enlightenment.'⁴⁵ 'Bad' District Officers, like 'bad' emirs, could be moved to non-emirate areas where their more direct methods of administration might be acceptable. 'Good' officers were by definition indirect rulers *pur sang*.⁴⁶ 'Good' emirs, like 'good'

⁴³ See M. Perham, *Lugard: The Years of Authority*, London 1960, p. 132.

⁴⁴ The speech of 21 March 1903 is reproduced in full in A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, *The Principles of Native Administration in Nigeria: Selected Documents, 1900-1947*, London 1965, pp. 43-4. A Hausa version is available in

A. Mani, *Zuwan Turawa Nijeriya ta Arewa (The Coming of the Europeans to Northern Nigeria)*, Zaria 1957.

⁴⁵ *Political Memorandum*, no. 9, par. 4.

⁴⁶ Cf. SNP Kaduna, Circular dated 1 July 1928, addressed to all Residents and the comments of the Resident Adamawa thereon contained in the follow-up

Residents, began to receive the accolade of the CMG (a peculiarly Christian order for Moslem potentates), even knighthoods for the senior ones. Native Administration was indeed the coinciding of interests, though, as with all forms of collaboration, there could never be any doubt where ultimate sovereignty lay.

Together, the theory of indirect rule and its practical implementation as Native Administration were to characterize the British administration of colonial Africa (save for Kenya) for the next forty-four years, and nowhere did the system attract more attention than in the emirates of Northern Nigeria. Both of the Lugardian textbooks, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (Edinburgh 1922) and *Political Memoranda* (1906; Lagos 1919), theory and practice, along with Sir Donald Cameron's *The Principles of Native Administration and their Application* (Lagos 1934), were based on emirate experience, and it is on the emirates that much of the leading literature on the collaborative nature of colonial administration has focused. The 'cardinal principle' was rule *through* emirs, who, while 'supported in every way and their authority upheld', were 'not to be regarded as independent chiefs'.⁴⁷ Thus the essence of the co-operation was that the emir should be seen to rule; the District Officer only advised and administered. He was, in one governor's colourful phrase, ideally 'the whisper behind the throne'.⁴⁸

At the end of the day, we may say that in the art of emirate collaboration, the District Officer could never have operated effectively without the co-operation of the emir and often the emir could not have survived without the support of the District Officer. In indirect rule, the collaborative symbiosis was complete. 'There are not two sets of rulers, British and Native', Lugard had laid down, 'working either separately or in co-operation, but a single government.'⁴⁹

CONCLUSION

We have seen that, in the face of the creeping threat of foreign intervention, the emirate leadership reacted in one of three ways to the infidel incursion. Either they ranged their armies against the aggressor and fought full-scale battles, for example the emir of Bida in 1897, the emir of Yola in 1901, the sultan of Sokoto in 1903, and the emir of Hadejia in 1906. Else, acting in their wisdom as father of their people, they deemed it prudent to adopt a policy of the lesser risk and, acknowledging the inevitable outcome of superior force, collaborate with the new rulers, for example the emir of Nassarawa in 1900, the emir of Muri in 1901, the emir of Katsina in 1903, and a whole host to follow: several of the emirs were to achieve the remarkable record of celebrating a golden jubilee, marking fifty years of collaboration on the throne. Or else, conscious of the magnetic quality of Mecca and manifesting Islam's underlying ethos of resignation to God's will, they sought salvation in another Hegira, for example the emir of Yola in 1901, the people of Jama'are in 1902 and, most spectacularly of all, the

circular of 23 Nov. 1928 both reproduced in Kirk-Greene, *Principles*, pp. 187-92; and the various entries of W. R. Crocker in his journal, reproduced in *Nigeria: A Critique of British Colonial Administration*, London 1936, Part I, *passim*.

⁴⁷ *Political Memorandum*, no. 9, pars. 1-3.

⁴⁸ Sir Hugh Clifford, Minute to the Lieutenant-Governor of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria, 18 Mar. 1922, par. 19, quoted in Kirk-Greene, *Principles of Native Administration*, p. 184.

⁴⁹ *Political Memorandum*, no. 9, par. 6.

Emir of Misau in 1902 along with the Sultan of Sokoto himself and his following of the Faithful in 1903.

These, then, were the triple options exercised by the emirs in their darkest hour. But precedent may become a pattern. In any forward projection of the succeeding predicaments and perils of Northern Nigeria's traditional rulers during and beyond the sixty years of British overrule, it is possible to perceive the same options being assessed and on occasion adopted by the emirs. The option of confrontation was, of course, no longer to be realized in terms of armed resistance, but its parallel of non-cooperation led to the deposition of numerous emirs throughout the years, reaching an astonishing colonial peak in 1952-3,⁵⁰ and an even more astounding political climax in 1963 when the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) forced the 'abdication' of Muhammadu Sanusi, emir of Kano, after a personality clash between traditional emir and elected premier.⁵¹ Again, right up to the 1960s, the option of withdrawal was still being exercised: in 1954 the emir of Yola, Ahmadu, decamped to the opposition' after his removal from the throne and offered himself as a NEPU (Northern Elements' Progressive Union) candidate; in 1964 the exiled emir of Kano set up his own political party, the Kano Peoples' Party, to challenge the government of the day; and, most scandalizing of all to the colonial authorities, the senior emir, Muhammadu, sultan of Sokoto, made precipitate flight across the border to Niamey in 1931. A disgruntled Hausa peasantry had, of course, long been wont to exercise this option of migration in the face of oppressive rule, whether home or colonial.

Not surprisingly, the option collaboration became the most common choice by the emirs. Rulers like (to follow the official Order of Precedence approved for Northern Nigeria's House of Chiefs) Abubakar of Sokoto, Yahaya of Gwandu, Abdullahi of Kano, Mustafa of Yola, Muhammadu Dikko and Usman Nagogo of Katsina, Ja'afaru of Zaria, Muhammadu Ndayako of Bida, Abdurrahman of Daura, Abdullahi of Yauri, Muhammadu Mafindi of Muri, Muhammadu Ibn Idrissa of Fika, and Umar Suleiman of Bedde, became names to generate respect, often affection, as shrewd, venerable and valued symbols of all the British believed to be best in indirect rule. If there are grounds for rejecting the term (but not the concept) 'collaborator' as too Quislingesque in the minds of those whose memories stretch back to the Second World War, there are just as strong grounds for discounting the simplistic correlation of co-operating chiefs with collaborative traitors. Far fairer, and firmer too, is the argument that in their role as father of their people the emirs did seriously rank their choices of response according to what they believed to be in the best interests of their subjects as well as of themselves.⁵² Cultural as well as physical survival was at stake; to ensure this, a price had to be paid to the invaders. All in all, emirate collaboration seemed to pay off the best—for all parties.

⁵⁰ Sir B. S. Smith, *But Always as Friends*, London 1969, ch. 15, 'Chiefs in a Changing World'. A witty young administrative officer in Kaduna at the time, which coincided with the very successful run of a popular musical in London, suggested that His Excellency might call any eventual biography 'The Kings and I'.

⁵¹ Cf. J. N. Paden, *Religion and Political Culture in Kano*, Berkeley 1973, pp. 267-9, and 'Government's Statement on Kano Native Authority Affairs', Kaduna, March 1963.

⁵² Support for this kind of reinterpretation of the role

of the emirs was forthcoming in two of the presentations made at the Berlin symposium by Nigerian scholars. Professor Obaro Ikime talked of how certain advantaged groups sought to maximize the benefits they derived from their link with the British so as to make the best of a situation which they may not have fully comprehended, let alone accepted, while Professor Anthony Asiwaju spoke of how African chiefs tended to look on indirect rule as something that could be adapted and moulded into workable procedures in the service of local interests.

In saying this, however, nobody should overlook the revealing assessment of M. G. Smith, in his analysis of the relations between the British and the Native Authority in Zaria emirate in the 1950s. He likened even the favourite Native Administrations of British Residents to 'autocracies ineffectively supervised by the British', with the emir striving to contain British supervision and at the same time retain his own control of the Native Administration.⁵³ David Dorward was treading on comparable ground when he put forward his concept of the Native Administration as an aggregate of 'working misunderstandings'.⁵⁴ 'In the end,' conceded Adamu Fika, writing of the impact of indirect rule on the epicentre of Native Administration, Kano emirate, 'it is amazing how the British achieved so much in changing the character of emirate government . . . That not much more was achieved can be explained by the strength of old traditions.'⁵⁵ Nor should one forget the grass roots accusation often levelled against the too 'good' colonial emir from his councillors and courtiers, that whereas in pre-colonial terms he had had to satisfy a million of his own subjects to avoid deposition, now all he had to do was to please a single British adviser. If the 'collaboration-is-best' point needs proving further, the experience of Usman Dan Fodio's Sokoto Caliphate furnishes generous evidence. Defeated in 1903, the doyen status of its Sultan was none the less supported, sustained, and even enhanced by the British at the expense of Kano's plausible claims to superior recognition throughout the colonial period. By means of the assimilative process of the Native Administration system, Sokoto's cultural influence was extended beyond the original Hausa emirates, to result in, as Crowder and others have observed, the progressive 'Hausafication' of peripheral kingdoms like Borgu and, later yet, a number of Middle Belt Native Authorities.⁵⁶ By the eve of independence Sokoto, in the shape of the Sardauna, great-great-grandson of the Shehu and leader of the NPC, seemed poised in his Kaduna *rabat* or stronghold to manipulate the political future of the colonial government's successor state of the Federation of Nigeria. The wheel had come full circle and once again a direct descendant of the Shehu was at the helm to make sure that, 150 years later, the second Sokoto empire was no less a force than the first.

POSTSCRIPT

Nowhere is the post-1906 continuity of crisis and choice for Northern Nigeria's traditional rulers clearer than in the final decade of colonial rule and in the opening years of independence. In 1953, the rise to political power of the ambitious, able, and authoritarian Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna of Sokoto (himself a scion of the royal house of Sokoto and, under the emirate succession system, a favourite heir-presumptive to the throne) and his determination to abrogate to himself the all-powerful portfolio of the Minister for Local Government, caused an unprecedented scare among the House of Chiefs. They were quick to see the establishment of such a post, tantamount to being

⁵³ M. G. Smith, *Government in Zazzau*, London 1960, pp. 291 and 280-8.

⁵⁴ D. Dorward, 'Ethnography and Administration: A Study of Anglo-Tiv "Working Understanding"', in *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 15 (1974), pp. 457-77.

⁵⁵ Fika, *Kano*, p. 273.

⁵⁶ Cf. M. Crowder, *Colonial West Africa*, London 1978, p. 175, and A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, *Mutumin Kirkii: The Concept of the Good Man in Hausa*, Bloomington, Indiana 1974, pp. 14 ff.

'Minister of Native Authorities' (that is, themselves), as a threat to their own powers. Once again, in 1953 as in 1903, the emirs had to decide whether to challenge, concede, or co-operate in the new scenario of *siyasa*, 'party politics'. And in the years that followed, those emirs who showed themselves no more than lukewarm in their support for the NPC found themselves exposed to the same kind of commissions of inquiry and face-saving 'abdication' ordered by the political government as had their non-cooperative predecessors under the colonial regime—as, for example, the First-Class Emirs of Zaria and Kano and several lesser chiefs were to learn to their personal cost. A dozen years later, in 1966, the emirs once again found themselves caught up in a crisis. Could they co-operate with an Ibo general who, after the devastating decree of 24 May, seemed to them intent on destroying the very fabric of the emirate way of life, or should they challenge him? Although not yet published, enough can be deduced about the contents of their letter sent to General Ironsi in June 1966 for us to entertain no doubt that this time the emirs opted for confrontation rather than collaboration.

There is, too, evidence of three instances of potential *Perol* in this same decade of political crisis for the emirates. In 1950, at the general conference on the review of the constitution convened in Ibadan, the emirs of Katsina and Zaria warned the southern delegates that if the north was not granted parity with the south in the distribution of seats in the proposed central House of Representatives, it would seek separation from the rest of Nigeria on the pre-1914 model.⁵⁷ Again, in 1953, shocked by the anger of the south against the north's modification of Chief Anthony Enahoro's 'Motion of Destiny' calling for self-government in 1956, the northern leaders, princes and politicians alike, gave serious thought to secession. Separation from the south seemed preferable to subjugation by it. Then, in 1966, stunned by the collapse of central government in Lagos, the northerners' first reaction was to march back across the Niger and declare a separate state. Three months later, the north was seen still to favour a political withdrawal, urging a policy of *a raba*, 'separation', a parting of the ways rather than a partnership of uneasy integration. In each case the emirs joined with the politicians or the soldiers in momentarily preferring withdrawal, or at the most a loose confederation, to the dangers of federation. In the end wiser voices prevailed. Only then could the instinctive recourse to *Perol* as the proper response to an overwhelming danger be safely suppressed.

Now, in 1984, the emirs, who have seen much of their public authority if not all of their personal influence deeply diluted under the military regime of 1975–9, are once more likely to be faced with critical choices as the new military government, recognizing the chiefs' irreplaceable role as sounding-boards of public feeling and indicators in the absence of elected institutions, looks set to pay them court.⁵⁸ Like the colonial administrators whom they complemented, respected, or tolerated, hopefully hoodwinked or successfully outwitted, for the emirs the tight-rope nature of their role and responsibilities often rendered them men of two socio-administrative worlds. To survive they had to learn to handle both. The British occupation was, in effect, the first major external test—in no way the last—of the emirs' shrewd skills in their practised

⁵⁷ *Proceedings of the General Conference on Review of the Constitution held at Ibadan, January 1950*, Lagos 1950, p. 218.

⁵⁸ Towards the end of 1984 a conference was called at

Ibadan by the Federal Military Government to consider the role of traditional rulers in the governance of present-day Nigeria—see reports in *Nigerian Newsletter*, 148 and 149 (1984).

art of leadership. What they learned in 1897-1906 about the genius and the art of flexibility, of accommodation, of resistance within limited co-operation, of bowing like reeds before the storm only to raise their heads and stand erect again when the hurricane has passed, may yet stand them in good stead as, a century or so later, they are still obliged to consider and select the most viable strategy for survival. To have experienced *and* to have survived successive intervention and interruption through sixty years of domination by a colonial power, twenty years of subordination to political parties, and fifteen years of authoritarianism of military regimes, all during a half-century when the crowned heads of Europe and the hereditary princes of India have fallen like the withered leaves of the baobab tree, is an eloquent tribute to the political wisdom of Northern Nigeria's traditional rulers when it comes to ranking the options of confrontation, concession, or co-operation as responses to an emirate crisis.

African Perception of the New European Policies in Africa during the 1880s*

FRANZ ANSPRENGER

On 15 November 1884 Sir Edward Malet, British ambassador to Berlin, opened the Berlin West Africa Conference. His words on that occasion do not strike us as mere diplomatic ornamentation; read today they seem bitterly ironic:

Si l'exploitation des marchés du Congo est désirable, le bien-être des indigènes ne doit pas être négligé. Ceux-ci perdront plus qu'ils ne gagneront, si la liberté du commerce, dépourvue de contrôle raisonnable, venait à dégénérer en licence . . . Je dois me rappeler que les indigènes ne sont pas représentés dans notre sein et que, cependant, les décisions de la Conférence auront pour eux une gravité extrême.

This was the situation at the time. A century later we must ask how the Africans appraised the new activities that their long familiar European visitors and trading partners engaged in on the coast of Africa from about 1884. Even if we have no record of statements by African diplomats at international conferences, it is possible to give at least provisional and partial answers to this question. Historians can make use of a few written sources of African origin; to be sure, almost all of them were produced by a small class of 'educated Africans', described below in greater detail. In addition, historians can critically assess the mass of material written by European colonial pioneers, and extrapolate from it information about the political behaviour of the Africans. Further, historians working in conjunction with linguists and sociologists can record and compile the orally transmitted history of Africa. Comparing it with the standard written source, they can make available a new type of source material.

This work, as far as I can see, is still in its infancy. To a large extent it is a task for African historians, now and in the future. History as a discipline profits when a French historian works on German history, and vice versa. For the same reason, Europeans should participate in this project. African and European historians working together should combine their linguistic, cultural, and psychological expertise to provide the best conditions for interpreting—perhaps even beginning to understand—the source material on African colonial history. After all, African and European strands constantly intertwine in it.

This paper can do no more than contribute general ideas to this project.

1. RESISTANCE AND COLLABORATION

In 1968 Terence O. Ranger introduced concepts of crucial importance into the historical discussion of African responses to European colonial conquest.¹ Working on

* Translated by Eamon Helly and Angela Davies.

¹ T. O. Ranger, 'Connections between 'Primary Resistance Movements and Modern Mass Nationalism

in East and Central Africa', in *Journal of African History*, 9 (1968), pp. 437-53, 631-41. Cf. Monographs by T. O. Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia, 1896-7*, London 1967,

East Africa and present-day Zimbabwe, Ranger established connections between 'primary resistance' and 'modern nationalism'. This terminology is clearly reminiscent of the opposition that lies at the heart of sociological modernization theories, that between the 'traditional' and the 'modern'. When Ranger was writing these theories were widely accepted; today most experts on (and from?) the Third World consider them hopelessly out-of-date. Ranger wants to abolish this distinction by establishing the existence of historical continuities. He assigns a higher value to the 'primary'—but by no means 'primitive'—component of resistance than did earlier scholars, and reveals its connections with what he describes not merely as the 'new', but more positively as the 'innovating' forces in African politics. But his study is clearly a one-sided analysis of African resistance to European colonial power. Immediately after most African nations achieved independence Ranger's work was highly topical—as is much history when it is written. The antithesis to resistance. African collaboration with the colonial system, was largely ignored; it was simply not discussed.

But it has to be discussed—in relation to Africa as much as to the history of France between 1940 and 1944 which, in my understanding, epitomizes the concepts of 'resistance' and 'collaboration'. My concern here is to illustrate the connections between resistance and collaboration, to trace continuities in time and space, and to show that individual leaders often collaborate and resist at the same time. Even in contemporary South Africa the situation is not simply one of the 'collaborator' Gatscha Buthelezi versus the 'resistance fighters' in the African National Congress. Some elements within the ANC display a certain degree of readiness to compromise—that is, collaborate—and Buthelezi's politics, as well as his rhetoric, can be seen as a particular form of resistance.

A history of the West African coast in about 1884 must examine African opinions of the new type of European presence, African attitudes towards it, and finally, African strategies for dealing with it. By 'opinions' I mean African perceptions of the Europeans and their behaviour; by 'attitudes' I mean the—perhaps new—ways of thinking and acting, the values and world views that developed among Africans in contact with Europeans; by 'strategies' I mean the political objectives and plans that these gave rise to, primarily for dealing with Europeans, but also in relation to African internal politics, which was certainly the priority in the long term.

It is therefore inadmissible, even provisionally, to speak of 'the' Africans without differentiation. Apart from the geographical, linguistic, and perhaps ethnic distinctions which emerge from all the sources because they were as apparent to the Europeans as to the Africans themselves, our questions must take social and economic differences into account from the start.

The chiefs, the rulers in those African political systems that, in modern technology, were 'state-like', formed one homogeneous group. In general, history and contemporary political science deal almost exclusively with the words and activities of 'chiefs'. Today perhaps more historians than in the past consider this regrettable and try to write history from below. This is difficult because under all circumstances, at all

and *The African Voice in Southern Rhodesia, 1898-1930*. London 1970, also B. Isaacman, 'Resistance and Collaboration in Southern and Central Africa, c.1850-1920', in *International Journal of African History*, 10 (1977), pp. 31-62.

times, and in all countries sources relate largely to the 'chiefs'. In the early colonial period in West Africa too, the Europeans who generated what have become historical sources, found mainly the chiefs worth mentioning. We can reconstruct what Samori thought of the French, but what his smith thought of the French repeating rifle he had to copy is probably lost forever.

At least two other groups, however, emerge from these sources. One is the group of middlemen who, since the time of the Atlantic slave trade, linked the black and the white worlds. Some of them seemed like chiefs to the Europeans—for example, the 'Kings' Akwa, Bell, and Dido in the district of the Duala on the Cameroon coast. In reality they were more like the proprietors of import-export firms than anointed monarchs. The crucial difference between them and the chiefs was that the wealth and power of the middlemen depended on their function in the European trade with Africa. In the sociological jargon of today, middlemen represented 'dependence', whereas chiefs presided over 'utocentric' systems.

The third group, finally, has already been briefly mentioned: the educated or, in French terminology, assimilated Africans. Nowadays they, together with the chiefs and middlemen, make up what many scholars call the 'ruling bureaucracy'. In 1884, however, the few French or English educated West Africans still lived in their own separate world. For most of them it was a world determined by one of the Christian Churches. But it was no longer the world of European Christianity and civilization that had prevailed a few decades before and that had been, at least in principle, non-racist. In the 1860s a Yoruba clergyman, Samuel Ajayi Crowther (1809–91), had become an Anglican bishop, and Dr James Africanus Horton (1834–83) from Sierra Leone had been appointed a British medical officer, rising to the rank of lieutenant colonel. By 1884, however, white racists were vigorously erecting racial barriers in order, among other things, to exclude educated Africans from the privileges of rule. This provides a general, but nevertheless adequate, explanation of the disunity among this group, but these circumstances did not by any means prevent educated Africans from writing—that is, producing ambivalent and in many cases contradictory sources. The colonial history of Africa cannot be reconstructed from an African point of view without taking into account these forerunners of modern African nationalism. But we should not overestimate their importance as political actors in their own time. 'Stages of African emancipation' have also existed outside the narrow circle of the assimilated.²

It is obvious that these three groups of African actors and producers of historical sources do not include the peasant farmers, who at that time represented almost the whole of the African population and today still form a large majority. We may assume that the words of the nostalgic soldiers' song adopted by the German youth movement: 'Die Bauern wollten freie sein, das wollt ihnen nicht gelingen' also applied to West Africa in 1884. But peasant farmers seldom write their own history, and African peasants are no exception in this respect. Only at second hand can we find out anything about their opinions and attitudes, not to mention their 'strategies'. African peasant farmers today may in fact be more independent of international forces than are

² In German, we still refer to G. Grohs, *Stufen afrikanischer Emanzipation: Studien zum Selbstverständnis westafrikanischer Eliten*, Stuttgart 1967.

other Third World peasants.³ But it is difficult, nevertheless, to see them as active agents in politics and society.

2. REFLECTIONS OF HISTORY IN THE MODERN AFRICAN NOVEL

Probably many modern African novels make reference to the first contacts between blacks and whites during the colonial conquest. I know of no systematic investigation of this theme. Obviously these novels cannot be used as primary historical sources, but we can assume that the authors often use material of a 'collective autobiographical' nature: oral traditions from their own extended families. Such accounts may contain indirect references to historical events. The following examples—chosen more or less at random—have one thing in common: the ambivalence of African assessments of the Europeans, and of the conclusions Africans drew for their own behaviour.

In the Ibo village which provides the setting for the first novel by the Ibo writer, Chinua Achebe, the first Europeans to appear are missionaries. (They are mentioned only in the last third of the book, and only in peripheral roles.) The collective opinion of them expressed in the form of a prophecy by an oracle when they are first introduced is unequivocally negative: 'The elders consulted their Oracle and it told them that the strange man would break their clan and spread destruction among them . . . It said that other white men were on their way. They were locusts, it said, and that first man was their harbinger sent to explore the terrain. And so they killed him.'⁴ Naturally, colonial troops mount a punitive expedition, resulting in many deaths, as a reprisal for the murder of this first white missionary, travelling alone. But no contact takes place here: 'The three white men and a very large number of other men surrounded the market. They must have used a powerful medicine to make themselves invisible until the market was full. And they began to shoot. Everybody was killed.' Not until later do the newly arrived missionaries and the villagers exchange ideas. The Africans clearly believe that the missionaries are mad:

After the singing the interpreter spoke about the Son of God whose name was Jesu Kristi. Okonkwo . . . now said: 'You told us with your own mouth that there was only one god. Now you talk about his son. He must have a wife, then.' The crowd agreed. 'I did not say He had a wife,' said the interpreter, somewhat lamely. 'Your buttocks said he had a son', said the joker. 'So he must have had a wife and all of them must have buttocks.' The missionary ignored him and went on to talk about the Holy Trinity. At the end of it Okonkwo was fully convinced that the man was mad.

But it is not only opinions that are important at this meeting. One of Okonkwo's sons joins the Christians, prompted by fear of bloody rites such as human sacrifice and exposure of newly born twins:

It was not the mad logic of the Trinity that captivated him. He did not understand it. It was the poetry of the new religion, something felt in the marrow. The hymn about brothers who sat in darkness and fear seemed to answer a vague and persistent question that haunted his young soul.

³ Cf. G. Hyden, *Beyond Ujamaa in Tanzania: Underdevelopment and an Uncaptured Peasantry*, London 1980.

⁴ C. Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, London 1958. Here a

paperback edition is quoted, New York 1969, p. 128; subsequent quotations pp. 129, 136 ff. Okonkwo is the hero of the novel, one who clings to old traditions.

The Cameroon intellectual Jean Ikellé-Matiba tells a different story: that of the treaty negotiations between a Bassa village (in the Duala hinterland, and so presumably not long after 1884) and a German officer immediately after a bloody but indecisive battle:

Après la signature du traité . . . le Germain, content de sa victoire, offrit vins, liqueurs, conserves, étoffes, armes, chaussures, sel, tabacs, bref tout ce qu'il avait d'objets d'importation, tout en nous félicitant de notre courage. Il reçut en échange des ivoires, de l'ébène et de l'or. Le commerce avait commencé. Puis le chef de troupe nous parla des écoles, des dispensaires, de la religion chrétienne et de l'obéissance au roi. Il venait, dit-il, conquérir le pays au nom du Kaiser, et entendait tenir sa promesse. Quant aux vieilles familles locales, elles n'avaient rien à craindre. Leurs enfants iraient apprendre dans les écoles du Kaiser en Allemagne. A leur retour, ils occuperaient des places importantes dans l'administration du pays. La province serait prospère. Partout des routes seraient construites. Des ponts franchiraient les cours d'eau. On irait d'un lieu à l'autre sans perdre du temps, sans crainte d'être assailli par des brigands. Tout serait tranquille, et tous seraient heureux. Ces paroles flattaient les niais.⁵

The author does not tell us what percentage of the population was made of these 'simpletons', or from what strata of society they came. He continues in the same negative vein: 'Ils oubliaient que c'est par de tels propos sonores qu'on enlève des empires. Nous devons sortir de notre existence harmonisée pour entrer dans la vie policée et subir toutes les vexations de ce régime.' But this is clearly his own opinion in historical retrospect, coloured by an ideology of pre-colonial harmony that was current at the time. The text testifies to the close coexistence in the past of resistance fighting, trade, and the flattering hope of 'development'.

Following the same train of thought, but on a more reflective level, the Senegalese writer Cheikh Hamidou Kane captures the impression that the invading whites made on his people:

Ceux qui débarquaient étaient blancs et frénétiques. On n'avait rien connu de semblable. Le fait s'accomplit avant même qu'on prit conscience de ce que arrivait. Certains, comme les Diallobé, brandirent leurs boucliers, pointèrent leurs lances ou ajustèrent leurs fusils. On les laissa approcher, puis on fit tonner le canon. Les vaincus ne comprirent pas. D'autres voulurent palabrer. On leur proposa, au choix, l'amitié ou la guerre. Très sensément, ils choisirent l'amitié: ils n'avaient point d'expérience. Le résultat fut le même cependant, partout. Ceux qui avaient combattu et ceux qui s'étaient rendus, ceux qui avaient composé et ceux qui s'étaient obstinés se retrouvèrent le jour venu, recensés, répartis, classés, étiquetés, conscrits, administrés. Car, ceux qui étaient venus ne savaient pas seulement combattre. Ils étaient étranges. S'ils savaient tuer avec efficacité, ils savaient aussi guérir avec le même art. Où ils avaient mis du désordre, ils suscitaient un ordre nouveau. Ils détruisaient et construisaient. On commença, dans le continent noir, à comprendre que leur puissance véritable résidait, non point dans les canons du premier matin, mais dans ce qui suivait ces canons. Ainsi, derrière les canonnières, le clair regard de la Grande Royale des Diallobé avait vu l'école nouvelle. L'école nouvelle participait de la nature du canon et de l'aimant à la fois . . . Le canon contraignait les corps, l'école fascine les âmes. Où le canon a fait un trou de cendre et de mort . . ., l'école nouvelle installe sa paix.⁶

The hero of the novel goes through this new French school (as previously he had gone through the harsh school of Senegalese Islam). The colonial order is understood and

⁵ J. Ikellé-Matiba, *Cette Afrique-là!*, Paris 1963.

⁶ C. H. Kane, *L'Aventure ambiguë*, Paris 1961. The author is a Ful like his hero, Samba Diallo.

accepted, but not uncritically: the new school does not simply provide peace, it establishes 'its peace', a unilaterally imposed order.

Several questions remain undecided. Did an understanding of the real context, strongly reminiscent of the Chinese imperial court's debates on 'reforms' in 1898, really occur soon after the first clash? Were the chiefs (represented in the novel by the Grande Royale) really the source of this understanding, or does it emanate from the minister of independent Senegal speaking in 1961?

3. THE BEHAVIOUR OF THE CHIEFS

To illustrate the opinions, attitudes, and strategies of the chiefs of pre-colonial African countries, I will discuss two examples which seem to derive from the extremes of the political spectrum: first, the Sardauna of Sokoto, Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello (1910-66), spokesman for the emirs of the Fulani-Caliphate in North Nigeria, who are considered to be the prototype of African collaboration with the colonial power (British, in this case), and secondly, Samori Turé (c.1830-1900),⁷ who resisted the advance of the French in West Sudan.

The sources I draw upon in the two cases are very different in nature. The historian Yves Person deals with Samori in his monumental *Thèse d'état*, which is based not only on European documents but also on African oral traditions; for the Fulbe emirs I rely on the Sardauna's autobiography, published shortly after Nigeria's independence. The Sardauna, Ahmadu Bello, was Prime Minister of the north region until his assassination during the country's first military coup. No one can doubt that Ahmadu Bello was immersed in the traditions of his family, his rank, and his Islamic faith. As the most powerful man in Nigeria, he presumably had no reason to conceal his opinions for the sake of pleasing anyone.

Ahmadu Bello writes widely about his country's political system in pre-colonial days, and about the British conquest:

Looking at it all now with my present knowledge I see that the constant fighting bore heavily on the people: that the Courts were just and carried out the law faithfully within their rights; that the taxation, though not unjust in principle, was sometimes unfair in its incidence . . . Changes were bound, in the nature of things, to come; we could not have resisted external influences much longer and, even if some had wished to do so, the effect of education, which too must have come to us before very long, would have forced a general tidying up.

Whatever the rights and wrongs of the attack on Kano and Sokoto may be, the British were the instrument of destiny and were fulfilling the will of God. In their way they did it well. Even at the actual time there was no ill-will after the occupation. We were used to conquerors and these were different: they were polite and obviously out to help us rather than themselves . . . They made no drastic changes, and what was done came into effect only after consultation.⁸

Leaving aside the supposed altruism of the colonizers (for decades there was not much to 'exploit' in North Nigeria), Ahmadu Bello's words express unequivocal pride in a tradition needing very little change. After all, the Sardauna's politics had been guided by this principle. His strategy, of course, was collaboration with the colonial conquerors.

⁷ This birth date is based on the biography: Y. Person, *Samori: Une révolution dyala*, 2 vols., Dakar 1968.

⁸ Sir A. Ahmadu Bello, *My Life*, Cambridge 1962, pp. 18-19.

It was justified by the realization that several currents were coming together in this historical event: power politics were see-sawing in a way that, despite some special features, was familiar, and social change was taking place quite independently of colonialism. Tradition-conscious Muslims certainly did not welcome it naïvely as progress, but it seemed irreversible. The main vehicle of this change—as in the novel by Cheikh Hamidou Kane—is the modern European school. Ahmadu Bello, who trained as a teacher at schools of this type, regards them unequivocally as positive.

Colonial conquest, confrontation with the white masters, is not regarded here as the one major catastrophe that transformed Africa. It is an important event, but only one among many that together make up history. With this view of the world, Ahmadu Bello, who can presumably be regarded as typical of his class, has confidence in the possibility of collaboration in which he does not lose 'his' Africa.

It is well known that there was no collaboration between Samori and the French. Since the 1860s Samori had built up an Islamic reformist government in that part of the Western Sudan that 1,000 years before had been the heartland of the Mali kingdom. In this case the French were clearly not interested in collaboration. But this was not a result of French policy in West Africa. To cite the two best-known examples, in Senegal and in the Mossi states in Upper Volta France developed forms of colonial rule that resembled British experiments in 'indirect rule' in North Nigeria.

The question that must be asked here is: what was Samori's attitude to the French? Person's biography provides no clear answers to this question. After the French had advanced to the Niger at Bamako (the present capital of Mali) in February of 1883, thus becoming Samori's neighbours, border skirmishes took place, but clearly neither side was aiming for a decisive military victory. On 16 April 1886 Samori concluded a treaty with a French delegation under Captain Tournier in Kényéby-Kura. Person, unlike earlier writers,⁹ describes it as 'a peace and trade treaty, but certainly not a treaty of protectorate'.¹⁰ An approximate territorial border was fixed, subjects of both powers were forbidden to cross it, an exchange of prisoners was agreed, and the prospect of a future alliance was held out. Both sides endorsed the principle of free trade, but Samori undertook to direct his export trade chiefly towards French territory.

In reality, Samori had no intention of keeping this commitment. He was far more interested in commercial contacts with the British in Sierra Leone and, during his later wars with France, munitions cases from Spandau near Berlin were once found among plunder captured by the French. But the treaty shows that Samori saw the future of his country depending chiefly on its relations with France and that he was therefore prepared to grant France territorial and other concessions, though not to the point of surrender. One year later, on 25 March 1887, in Bisandugu, Captain Péroz changed the treaty in favour of the French by adding a supplementary agreement, in particular, a protectorate clause. Samori tried to resist this, but in the end he yielded and signed—perhaps because he did not recognize the implications of the magical word 'protectorate', and certainly because he was preparing another campaign and wanted to keep a free hand.

Samori understood enough of his adversary's political system to try, in Bisandugu, to play off the government in Paris, which made no demands of him, against its

⁹ Cf. A. S. Kanya-Forstner, *The Conquest of the Western Sudan: A Study in French Military Imperialism*, Cambridge 1969.

¹⁰ Person, *Samori*, pp. 687 ff.

representatives on the spot. In 1886 he sent his third son, Dyaulè-Karamogho, to visit France. We know that behind this invitation from Paris lay the intention of inflicting a psychological shock, and Person believes it succeeded: 'The young man returned home dazzled and profoundly convinced of the crushing superiority of the Europeans.'¹¹ But at best, we have only indirect evidence of how Samori received reports from his son and his son's attendants.

Samori's unsuccessful attempt to exploit the differences between Paris and the French army in Africa is one piece of evidence. Another is the fact that Samori's son was accompanied on his journey to Europe not only by officers from Samori's troops (the Sofa), but also by smiths from his household. Samori was disposed to learn from Europe—perhaps more than the Fulbe emirs of Nigeria, and in any event, in a different field, that of warfare.

From 1885 on, and more especially after 1890, Samori created small guard regiments, based on European models, in his army. As instructors he favoured Africans who had served as soldiers either in the French or the British colonial forces. But it seems that these instructors were never entrusted with authority to command. Samori tried to buy as many modern guns and cartridges as possible to equip these soldiers, who provided his own personal guard, and later also served in other units. Most of the arms came from the export trade with Sierra Leone, mentioned above, but Samori's smiths also copied European repeater rifles—Person mentions a figure of two a day, and is convinced that these weapons worked.¹²

We can conclude, therefore, that Samori had some confidence in the Europeans, but that it was limited to European military technology. A similar attitude can be seen among one faction in the almost contemporaneous 'modernization' disputes at the Chinese court. Their exclusive interest in the arsenals, battleships, and cannon of the West was the undoing of these mandarins; Samori suffered a similar fate. Armament technology alone cannot provide a basis for political co-operation.

4. THE AFRICAN COASTAL TRADERS' TRUST BETRAYED

We possess considerably better sources on the relations between the European colonizers and those Africans on the West Coast who can collectively be labelled 'middlemen'. The division between 'middlemen' and chiefs on the one hand, and intellectuals on the other is, of course, flexible, and in individual cases arbitrary.¹³

On the African side the relationship was obviously based on trust; they had known these Europeans for many generations, and had always done good business with them. Although the Europeans were strange people, African traders were confident that they could identify their interests, and therefore predict their behaviour fairly accurately.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 695.

¹² Ibid., p. 923; cf. p. 978.

¹³ An elaboration of the written (European) sources is provided by A. D. Nzemeke on a particularly important region of West Africa, see A. D. Nzemeke, *British Imperialism and African Response: The Niger Valley, 1851-1905*, Paderborn 1982. Always worth referring to is K. O. Dike,

Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885, Oxford 1956. Self-portrayals by Africans are to be found in D. Westermann, *Afrikaner erzählen ihr Leben*, Essen 1938 (particularly the chapter on Bonifatius Foli from Tonga, pp. 21-113) and to a certain extent in M. Perham, *Ten Africans*, London 1963, 2nd edn. (in the chapter on Udo Akpabio from contemporary Cross River State in South Nigeria).

This was no longer true in 1884, but historical experience supported the old attitude outlined above. The trade initiated by European seafarers, first in slaves and then in African agricultural products, had allowed prosperous African societies to be established on the coast of West Africa over the centuries. As a rule, African agriculture could provide the goods wanted by Europeans without changing its social structures or means of production. Previously these zones, which were unhealthy not only for whites, had been areas to which defeated peoples from the more northern savannah and Sahel belts had retreated. The current affluence of these coastal societies was based largely on European goods (arms, textiles, and especially spirits) acquired in exchange for slaves, palm oil, and cotton.

As far as the Africans were concerned, this relationship could continue, and this wish fed many thoughts about the Europeans. Ten years after the Berlin West Africa Conference, Gottlob Adolf Krause (1850–1938), German traveller in Africa, commented bitterly: 'Vertrauen muß errungen werden, und wer Vertrauen erringen will, muß dessen würdig sein. Die Eingeborenen sind dieselben geblieben, aber die Europäer kommen jetzt zu ihnen mit falschen Herzen und mit falscher Zunge.'¹⁴

Nzemeke takes seriously the standard formula used in colonization treaties, whereby the European power undertakes to 'protect' a territory 'in compliance with the request of the Chiefs and people'. In one case, he points out, African trust was not limited to trade relations. Nzemeke writes:

On the part of the natives, the inroads of imperialism, other things apart, were prepared gradually through their acquaintance with aspects of European culture which they considered would be to the general good of their respective communities. This was particularly the case with the coastal Chiefs. French agents had in 1883 got several of them in the vicinity of Batanga, a district of the Cameroon country, to sign treaties of cession with them after eliciting an expression of their readiness to receive a missionary, 'to teach their people "book"'.¹⁵

Again, Africans see the modern school as a positive achievement of the Europeans. We know, for example, that Sultan Njoya in Bamun (Cameroon), who came to power in 1883, invented and introduced a script without assistance from Europeans. Later, however, he was renowned as a collaborator with the German colonial government rather than as a resistance fighter. But almost everywhere in West Africa establishing contact with Christian missionaries was seen as the easiest way to gain access to the secrets contained in European books.

The confidence of African societies diminished as the Europeans began to put into effect the provisions they had laid down in Article 35 of the General Act of 1885: 'to insure the establishment of authority in the regions occupied by them on the coasts of the African Continent sufficient to protect existing rights, and, as the case may be, freedom of trade and of transit under the conditions agreed upon'.¹⁶ Gradually it dawned upon each middleman that this meant the rights of the whites and not the tariff autonomy of, for example, Ja Ja of Opobo, who had written explicitly to the British in 1882: 'My first and last words are that the country belongs to me and I do not want

¹⁴ *Neue Preussische Zeitung* (Berlin) 24–7 Nov. 1895. quoted from P. Sebald, *Malam Musa-Gottlob Adolf Krause*, Berlin 1972, p. 45.

¹⁵ Nzemeke, *British Imperialism*, p. 207.

¹⁶ R. J. Gavin and A. Betley (eds.), *The Scramble for Africa: Documents on the Berlin West African Conference and Related Subjects, 1884/85*, Ibadan 1973, p. 300.

white traders . . . there [in a specific area of the interior]. Any one who wants to trade . . . with me' can do so in Opobo harbour.¹⁷

These conditions led to a *cause célèbre* in German colonial history: a dispute between the Duala and the government of Cameroon. The protection agreement of 12–13 July 1884 precisely documents the initial attitude of this typically middleman nation:

We give this day our rights of Sovereignty, the Legislation and Management of this our Country entirely up to Mr Eduard Schmidt acting for the firm C. Woermann and Mr Johannes Voss acting for Mssrs Jantzen & Thormählen, both in Hamburg, and for many years trading in this river. We have conveyed our rights of Sovereignty, the Legislation and Management of this our own Country to the firms mentioned above under the following reservations.

1. under reservation of the rights of third persons.
2. reserving that all friendship and commercial treaties made before with other foreign governments shall have full power.
3. that the land cultivated by us now and the places, the towns are built on, shall be the property of the present owners and their successors.
4. that the Coumie shall be paid annually as it has been paid to the Kings and Chiefs as before.
5. that during the first time of establishing an administration here, our country-fashions will be respected.¹⁸

This text makes us question the standard contention that the African partners to treaties with the colonial powers did not understand the meaning of sovereignty and its renunciation and, in particular, the meaning of political power of disposition over land in the European sense. What was the point of the conditions imposed by the Duala if not to protect them from specific consequences of European concepts of sovereignty? Though the interests that the Duala wished to further by means of the treaty are not explicitly mentioned in the text of the agreement, they are clearly apparent in the early history of the Cameroon colony: the Duala hoped that the establishment of the new 'administration' and German 'management' would allow them to extend and increase their own trade with the peoples of the hinterland. But the Duala wanted their commercial structures to remain as they were, and the points that were important to them are expressed in the proviso clauses of the agreement. Why they thought in 1884 that they would do better with the Germans than, for example, with the competing British, is another matter. For almost ten years the Duala's expectations—their confidence in the Germans—were not disappointed, although internal quarrels (perhaps for the best positions with the new 'allies')¹⁹ meant that by Christmas German officials turned their cannons on the Duala in order to enforce their 'laws' and establish their 'management'. (The Maxim gun later celebrated by Hillaire Belloc had not yet been invented.)

The Duala and the German colonial administration did not come into serious conflict until about 1895, when it became apparent that the colonial power had no

¹⁷ Ja, Ja to Lord Granville, 3 Apr. 1882; quoted from Dike, *Trade and Politics*, pp. 251 ff.

¹⁸ Quoted from A. Ruger, 'Die Duala und die Kolonialmacht, 1884–1914', in H. Stoecker (ed.), *Kamerun unter deutscher Kolonialherrschaft*, 2 vols., Berlin 1960–8, vol. 2, pp. 181–259, here p. 259. The Coumie was the traditional fee that the European traders paid to

the African middlemen. Cf. also R. A. Austen, 'The Metamorphosis of Middlemen: The Duala, Europeans and the Cameroon Hinterland, ca.1800–ca.1960', in *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 16 (1983), pp. 1–24.

¹⁹ Cf. H. P. Jaeck, 'Die deutsche Annexion', in Stoecker, *Kamerun unter deutscher Kolonialherrschaft*, pp. 29–96, here pp. 71 ff.

intention of using the Duala as middlemen in its expansion into the interior. On the contrary, it wanted to exclude them so that German companies could benefit directly from any additional business generated. Rüger's study, quoted above, illustrates precisely the new strategies that the Duala were developing. We have not so far devoted much attention to our concept of 'strategy'; in discussing it now, it will be necessary to make a brief digression beyond the period which is our main concern.

Three aspects of the Duala strategy between 1895 and 1914 are worth noting.

1. The Duala did not cling to the middleman monopoly as their only means of survival, although that is what it had traditionally been. They developed new sources of profit from independent production and the exploitation of natural resources, especially large-scale elephant hunts. Naturally the Germans then wanted to appropriate these sources of wealth too.

2. The Duala tried to present a united front against the Germans, despite long-standing rivalries between individual 'firms' (especially Bell and Akwa). For many years they were unsuccessful, but shortly before 1914, according to Rüger, the entire Duala resistance—extending beyond the Duala nation—rallied around Rudolf Duala Manga Bell. Immediately after the outbreak of the First World War he was hanged, as an alleged traitor. The example of the Duala illustrated the tendency of the early African resistance to break down the boundaries of older political systems in order to confront the colonial power on as broad a front as possible. This trend has been documented by T. O. Ranger's 'school' for other parts of Africa.

3. At high personal risk to their couriers, the Duala systematically defied the ban that the colonial administration tried to impose on communications between Cameroon and Germany. The Duala appealed directly to the Reichstag as the only official body in Imperial Germany from some of whose members at least they could expect certain concessions. A genuine alliance was thus created between the spokesmen for an African nation and German Social Democracy.

The Duala leaders, and especially Rudolf Manga Bell, quickly learned to manipulate German politics skilfully. Thanks to Hellmut von Gerlach, they were soon as familiar with the way in which the German press functioned as they were with the workings of the law (they employed first-rate lawyers, including Hugo Haase, who later became the first leader of the Independent Social Democratic Party), and the procedure for petitioning the Reichstag directly. Naturally all this only had any point if the Duala remained loyal to the German Reich in the future, as the purpose of their resistance was to overcome their status of colonial subjection and gain equal rights with the whites, that is, the civil rights of a German. This is why Rudolf Manga Bell only toyed with the idea of exchanging German domination for British domination, and did nothing to implement it before the outbreak of war in 1914.

The Duala strategy towards the Germans illustrates clearly that resistance and collaboration are not direct opposites. In African colonial history they are two sides of the same coin.

Bonifatius Foli's autobiography, written in 1930 at the request of Diedrich Westermann, takes us from the macrolevel of Duala politics to the microlevel of individual recollection. Like the Duala, the Ewe on the coast of Togo were long familiar with Europeans and used to doing business with them.

None the less the two cultures remained alien to each other. Their value systems clashed. At contact, great importance was attributed by one culture to insignificant aspects of the other culture, making misunderstandings inevitable from the start. The first whites that Foli came into contact with were missionaries, not officials, soldiers, or traders, though the Togo coast was already German at that time (Foli was born c. 1877). His account is reminiscent of the scene, quoted above, from Chinua Achebe's novel. The subject, however, is not the Christian religion as such but, once again, the missionary school which Foli has been asked to attend. Foli sums up the attitude of the 'traditional' culture towards the white school in the words of his grandmother:

Großmutter fragte: 'Was soll er denn bei den Weißen tun?' 'Sie wollen ihn in Büchern unterrichten.' Darauf entgegnete die Großmutter: 'Unsere Vorfahren, die sich in diesen Ländern niederließen, wußten nichts von Büchern, aber sie verstanden die Stämme zu regieren. Auch wenn du, Foli, nicht aus Büchern lernst, so bist du doch ein Königssohn. Wenn es Gottes Wille ist, daß du einst König wirst . . . —all das ist in der Hand Gottes, nicht in der Menschen Händen . . . Deshalb kann ich es nicht billigen, daß Foli aus Büchern lernt; denn ein Königssohn darf keine Schuhe anziehen, und keinen Schirm tragen, bevor er König geworden ist. Wenn nun Foli in die Schule geht und lesen lernt, wird er die Art des weißen Mannes annehmen, er wird Schuhe tragen und einen Schirm benutzen, und damit wird er die heiligen Gesetze unserer Familie verletzen.'²⁰

This protest is to no avail; despite it, Foli goes to the German missionary school. A few pages later he reports how he combines an appeal to an important value in his old culture—his rank of chief—with the benefits conferred by the modern school in order to increase the standing of his people:

Als wir wieder in Adjido waren, mußte ich eines Tages mit dem Präfekten auf die Regierungsstation nach Sebe gehen. Dort wurde unter Herrn v. Puttkamer ein Gericht abgehalten. Man fragte mich, ob der Foli Tomas mein Verwandter sei. 'Ja,' sagte ich, 'er ist der Sohn des älteren Bruders meines Vaters.' 'Hast du ihn überredet, die Schule in Adjido zu besuchen?' 'Jawohl, das habe ich getan.' 'Wußtest du, daß er schon in der (Wesleyaner-)Schule in Glidji war?' 'Ja, das wußte ich.' 'Warum hast du ihn dann in die Schule in Adjido gelockt?' 'Er sagte mir, der Sierra-Leone-Lehrer in der Wesleyanerschule prügele die Kinder unausgesetzt, da riet ich ihm, er solle doch in die Schule in Adjido kommen, daß er Deutsch lerne; jetzt seien die Deutschen im Lande, und da sei es besser, daß er ihre Sprache lerne.' Der Dolmetscher, ein Anglo-Mann, der mit einer Base von mir verheiratet war, wurde während der Verhandlung ausfallend gegen mich, da sagte ich ihm, er solle sich nur in acht nehmen, wenn er schnauzen wolle, solle er lieber nicht mich anschnauzen, sonst werde ich ihm seine Frau wegnehmen und sie einem anderen Mann geben. 'Ich weiß wohl, du stammst aus Keta und hast deinen Posten bekommen, weil du Deutsch verstehst; wenn wir erst so weit sind, daß auch wir die Sprache beherrschen, brauchen wir dich überhaupt nicht mehr hier. Frage doch meinen Onkel Kwevi Geli, wem deine Frau angehört und wer ich bin, er wird dir schon sagen, daß in unserem Lande mir niemand zu befehlen hat.'²¹

Foli makes no mention of resistance to the Germans, their domination and/or their culture. One reason for this may be that at the time when he was writing European control of Africa seemed to be something permanent; another factor may be that conditions in German Togo were extremely peaceful. Foli speaks as a collaborator who

²⁰ Westermann, *Afrikaner*, pp. 57 ff.

²¹ Westermann, *Afrikaner*, pp. 66 ff.

is proud not only of his adaptation to the Germans, but also of his old culture and the rank that it confers. The statement made later by Senghor, 'assimiler, non être assimilés',²² could have been made by Foli.

In spite of his education, baptism and rank, Bonifatius Foli did not become an intellectual. As far as the Europeans were concerned, he remained a houseboy, although he did become cook for August Köhler, Governor from 1895 to 1902. A final anecdote illustrates both Foli's self-assurance and the 'strategy' he pursued in his relations with the whites:

Der Gouverneur brachte eine weiße Haushälterin mit . . . Ich mußte nun immer nach dem Buch kochen. Die weiße Frau las mir aus dem Buch alles vor, und danach mußte ich mich richten. Sagte ich einmal: 'So geht das nicht', dann wurde sie gegen mich wütend. Nach einer Zeitlang erkrankte sie und ich mußte allein kochen. Da ließ Herr Köhler mich eines Tages zu sich rufen und fragte, warum das Essen denn jetzt so ordentlich sei. Meine Antwort war: 'Weil ich allein koche, die weiße Frau liest mir das Kochen aus dem Buch vor, und wenn ich dann Einwendungen mache, so fängt sie an zu weinen und ruft: Ich habe in Europa kochen gelernt, und du schwarzer Junge willst mich belehren? Wenn dann das Essen mißrät, bekomme ich von dir Prügel.' Herr Köhler fragte, warum ich ihm nichts davon gesagt hätte, und darauf ich: 'Wir Schwarzen bekommen beim Europäer doch kein Recht, darum habe ich geschwiegen in der Hoffnung, daß eines Tages Gott meine Leiden enden werde.'²³

This attitude is not far removed from resistance.

5. THE DILEMMA OF THE INTELLECTUALS

Sources indicate that in the nineteenth century many 'educated Africans' found it more difficult than did Bonifatius Foli to come to terms with the conflict between their African traditions and the modern lifestyles they were exposed to by a European education. But in this context we can report only on the small world of the old British bases on the West African coast—Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, and Lagos; our findings do not apply to the *Quatre Communes* in Senegal.²⁴

Some of the English-speaking, black West African intellectuals tried to participate in politics, which involved co-operating with the traditional chiefs, especially during the establishment of the short-lived Fanti Confederation (1868–73) in the hinterland of the Gold Coast. The Ghanaian historian Adu Boahen sees this attempt to establish a state as a 'genuine and real nationalist movement' and 'a culmination of years of resistance to the extension of British power and jurisdiction'. He admits, however, that the attempt by intellectuals and chiefs to establish a confederation with a modern constitution was motivated by 'the perennial fear of Asante domination of the coast'. It is certainly true that in the last third of the nineteenth century that Fanti no longer regarded themselves as occupying a comfortable 'middleman position' between the Ashanti warrior kingdom and the Europeans on the coast, but felt increasingly threatened by both sides. The question is whether Boahen is right in retrospectively

²² L. S. Senghor, 'Vues sur l'Afrique noire ou assimiler, non être assimilés', in R. Lemaignan, L. S. Senghor, and Prince S. Youtévong, *La Communauté impériale française*, Paris 1945, pp. 55–98.

²³ Westermann, *Afrikaner*, p. 105.

²⁴ On Senegal see e.g. G. Unser, *Intelligenzia und Politik im Senegal: Von den Anfängen bis zur Unabhängigkeit im Jahre 1960*, Aachen 1971, pp. 356–454.

presenting the British as an active threat and the Ashanti merely as a passive threat. Similarly, it is an open question whether the failure of the confederation was due primarily to British hostility in this twilight hour of informal empire, or whether the rivalry between individual Fanti chiefs, as well as the other internal factors he mentions, played a larger part than he suggests.²⁵ In any case, this attempt by an African people to respond to new, threatening challenges (from whatever direction) by enlarging the scale of their own political system, and thus strengthening it, proved unsuccessful.

For our approach here, it is significant that in 1870 James Africanus Horton, one of the leading black intellectuals of his time (that is, the period immediately before the scramble for Africa) demanded that the British government treat the Fanti Confederation as an independent African nation. On the other hand, in the same source, Horton presupposed that the Confederation would be 'loyal' to the British colonial government on the coast.²⁶ He was proud of the constitution that the Fanti had devised (on paper), based on the European principle of the division of power. On the other hand, Horton regarded the Fanti as a basically primitive people who needed a dictatorship to ensure economic progress and development (he was a modern man!):

I verily believe . . . that in the government of a semi-barbarous race, where the aim is to bring up the governed rapidly to advancement in industrial pursuits, education, and general social condition, *a little despotism is absolutely necessary* [italics in original]. But it must be understood that this despotism must not be used for the exertion of uncalled-for arbitrary power, which an intelligent race might think, simply from its superior intelligence, it ought to exact over the other as being less informed. But it should be more on principles of equity, having this object in view—the *material advancement of the people* [italics in original].²⁷

Even here Horton warns against any return to direct rule, which he considers obsolete; by 1870, however, this change had long been under consideration by the authorities in London as well as in Africa. But Horton uses typically colonialist racist arguments to support his case. His attitude towards his own people is not merely ambivalent; it could almost be described as schizoid. In my opinion it corresponds precisely to a split in Horton's attitude towards the European culture and civilization he has assimilated. Subjectively, Horton tried to overcome this split by dreaming of a modern, independent West Africa (in concrete terms, a confederation of the Fanti): 'a confederation of all their kings [in the hinterland of the Gold Coast], recognizing one person of influence as their superior'.²⁸ The historical context shows clearly that by 'superior' he means a person like himself, an intellectual. Merely a dream? It is uncanny to see how almost a century later, this daring idea became a reality in precisely that part of the world—and what 'blessings' it brought to the people of Ghana. But first, Africa experienced the advent of the Maxim gun and the European colonial conquest, under which African intellectuals were given no opportunity to become political leaders. Consequently, therefore, the African patriot and British medical officer James Horton did not utter another political word in public after 1870, although he did not retire until 1880 at the age of 45.

²⁵ A. Boahen, 'Politics in Ghana, 1800-1874', in J. F. A. Ajayi and M. Crowder (eds.), *History of West Africa*, 2 vols., London 1974, vol. 1, pp. 167-261, here pp. 252 ff.

²⁶ A. B. Horton, *Letters on the Political Condition of the*

Gold Coast (1870), London 1970, 2nd edn., by E. A. Ayandele. Here Letter no. 9 of 2 May 1870, pp. 132-67.

²⁷ Horton, *Letters*, p. 138.

²⁸ Horton, *Letters*, p. 153.

Not all black intellectuals were silenced in 1884, after their hopes were temporarily dashed—far from it. But as a rule they shared Horton's fundamentally ambivalent attitude: the European conquest of Africa was a misfortune for Africans, but the only arsenal in which black intellectuals sought weapons to defend their peoples was that of Europe. I wish to discuss two more examples of this.

The diagnosis is clear in the case of 'Holy' Johnson, an Anglican clergyman from Sierra Leone. Johnson did not become a bishop in his diocese in Yorubaland in 1880 (as had Samuel Ajayi Crowther a generation earlier) because white missionaries would no longer tolerate a black superior—and certainly not a man like Johnson: 'To have James Johnson as a Bishop, a man who would expect not only Africans but Europeans as well to observe Christian ethics in a very rigid form and whose attitude was undisguisedly in favour of Africans, would be for the European missionaries gall and wormwood.'²⁹ Johnson was an African nationalist who wanted to see blacks in control of their Church, obviously regarding this as a kind of training ground for independent West African national politics. (Today we would speak of 'Nigerian politics', because his aim was to break down the small traditional political units.) Johnson was also an extremely doctrinaire Christian in the late Victorian style. On the one hand, therefore, he had to condemn (as did many of his contemporaries, both black and white) the alleged moral 'depravity' of the creole society on the African coast, from which he himself was descended. (This was an atomized society of free and settled slaves, and had no shared African traditions). On the other hand, the pagans of the hinterland could not serve as a model for 'Holy' Johnson. Johnson did not shun conflict with his own community. At Christmas 1884, for example, he high-handedly refused a polygamous Christian Holy Communion.³⁰ Johnson was a sharp and, even by today's standards, well-informed critic of the economic and political conditions of European colonialism on the west coast of Africa. He and his followers were thinking of an independent (or, in modern terminology, self-reliant) but Christian (in the narrow, clerical sense of the word) Africa.

Even before 1884 Johnson was aware that economic and political support would be needed if Africa was to be Christianized. For him it was self-evident that only Britain could provide this support, and he appealed directly to Britain to build railways and lay telegraph lines into the interior, to industrialize and put an end to tribal warfare, thus guaranteeing Christian peace among the peoples of Africa.³¹ How could an intellectual see these demands as an anticolonial programme? In my opinion his reasoning was probably similar to that by which the Duala interpreted their treaty of surrender in 1884 as a guarantee of rights. During the scramble for Africa 'Holy' Johnson's first concern was African national solidarity: his politics consisted essentially of a series of protests against British military expeditions to extend colonial rule. Johnson espoused the cause of hitherto independent African states—including the tiny pagan states of Ashanti and Benin—and called them victims of unprovoked British aggression. But Johnson recognized a limit: he condoned the subjugation of the bloody Abomey state and of the Ibo, some of whom were cannibals and whom he regarded as barbaric and savage. He also differentiated between colonial rulers: life in British territories

²⁹ E. A. Ayandele, *Holy Johnson, Pioneer of African Nationalism 1836-1917*, London 1970, pp. 150 ff.

³⁰ Ayandele, *Holy Johnson*, pp. 106 ff. The altercation

occurred at Breadfruit Church in Lagos, Johnson's parish at that time.

³¹ Ayandele, *Holy Johnson*, pp. 195 ff.

(especially in Nigeria) seemed to him more bearable than under the Germans (in Cameroon), the Spanish (in Fernando Po), Leopold II in the Cong, or the Boers in South Africa. There may have been some objective truth in this. Such thoughts allowed 'Holy' Johnson to reconcile his stance as a black nationalist with his loyalty to Britain.

Edward W. Blyden is our last witness to the split personality of African intellectuals. He was in direct contact with 'Holy' Johnson, but at least in some of his writings found a different solution to his dilemma.³² While endorsing Johnson's contempt for the creoles of the African coast (the Jews do not have a monopoly on self-hatred), Blyden approvingly quotes (from the report of a European (!) visitor) the negative opinion of the creoles expressed by, of all people, the Dahomey king condemned by Johnson: 'He [the Dahomey king in 1863] said: "Who knew they were Christians? The black man says he is a white man, calls himself a Christian, and dresses himself in clothes: it is an insult to the white man. I respect the white man, but these people are imposters, and no better than my own people." I reasoned with him no longer on this subject (adds the Commodore), because I thought his observations so *thoroughly just and honest* [Blyden's italics].' Blyden continues: 'Now here is a Christian European of intelligence and influence endorsing the disparaging estimate of Christian Africans as given by a Pagan African of intelligence and influence.'³³

Blyden considered the Christian creoles of the African coast slow and unprogressive,³⁴ because no truly independent, self-reliant community of Christian blacks existed anywhere in the world—Blyden expressly included Liberia and Haiti in his assessment. Unlike Johnson, Blyden did not extol a future Christian state as embodying the Utopian dream of a free Africa; instead, he looked to the African Islam of his time. In 1873, in the course of a journey into the hinterland between Freetown (Sierra Leone) and the free Islamic Fulbe state of Futa Jallon, Blyden had come to respect Islam. His description contains many of the stereotypes of western development ideology: 'When we left a Pagan and entered a Mohammedan community, we . . . discovered that the character, feelings, and conditions of the people were profoundly altered and improved . . . No one will doubt that Islam as a creed is an enormous advance not only on all idolatries, but on all systems of purely human origin . . . The Koran is, in its measure, an important educator . . . It has furnished to the adherents of its teachings in Africa a ground of union which has contributed vastly to their progress.'³⁵ Blyden was aware, and left written testimony of this in the 1880s, that the Islamic conquerors of his own time had spread the faith in West Africa by the sword, and that 'heathen' Africans had resisted them with all the means at their disposal, including suicide. But for Blyden that did not outweigh the achievements of Islam—and they were identical to the justifications paraded by Christian European imperialism. It was the combination of education and political alliances crossing tribal divisions that fascinated him.³⁶

³² Cf. Ayandele, *Holy Johnson*, pp. 59 ff. on Blyden's relations with Johnson and the opportunism of the former.

³³ E. W. Blyden, 'Christian Missions in West Africa' (October 1875), in id., *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* (1887), Edinburgh 1967, p. 52. Blyden's authority is Commodore Wilmot and he quotes a report by the latter to Admiral Walker dated 21 Jan. 1863.

³⁴ E. W. Blyden, 'Mohammedanism and the Negro

Race' (Nov. 1875), in id., *Christianity*, p. 10.

³⁵ id., p. 6.

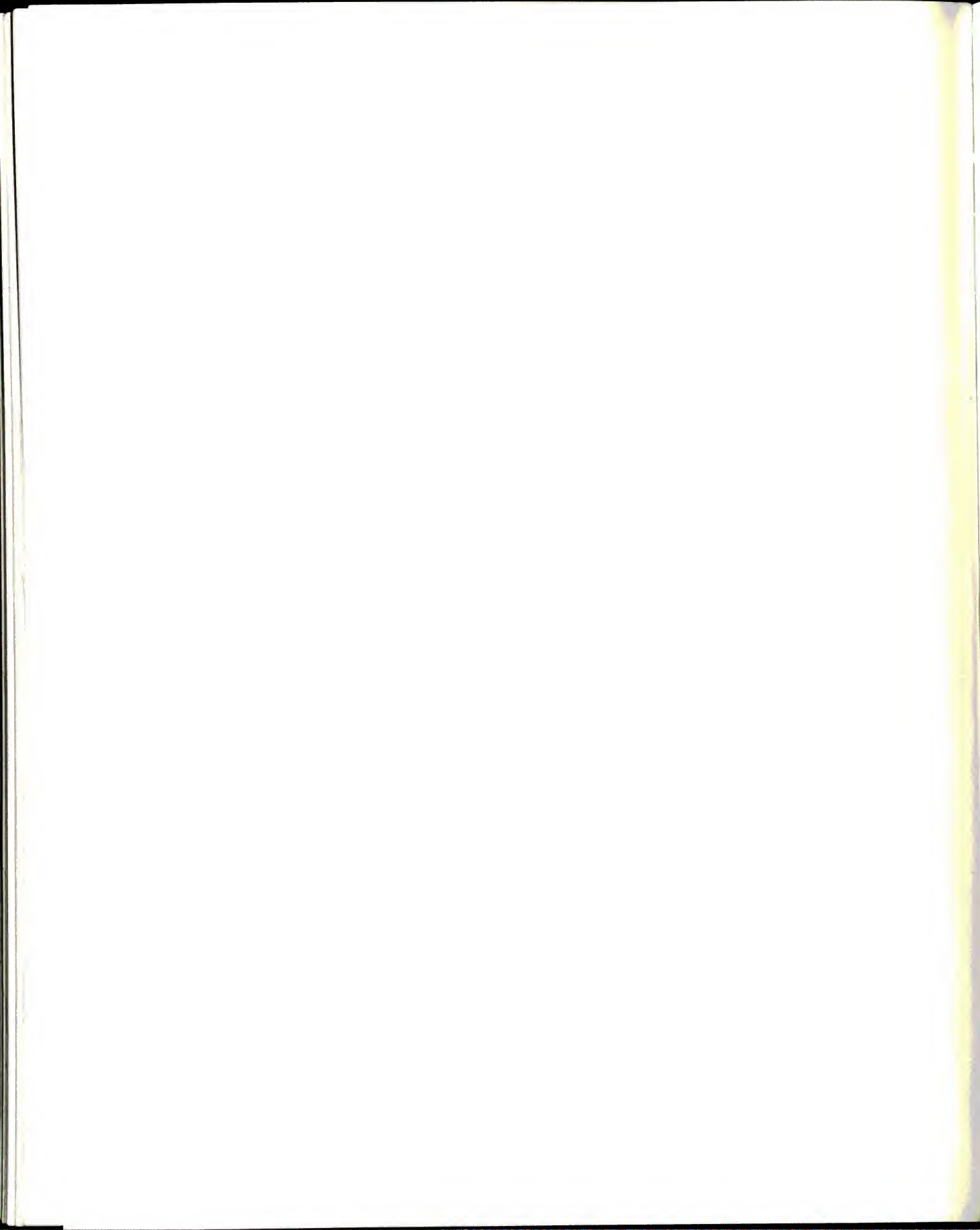
³⁶ E. W. Blyden, 'The Mohammedans of Nigritia', in: id., *Christianity*, p. 313. Blyden's report here is based on a report written in Arabic 'by a native chronicler' on an Islamic conqueror in West Sudan whom he names 'the Iman Ahmadu Samudu'. I believe that Samori Turé and he are one and the same.

In spite of his enthusiasm, Edward Wilmot Blyden never made the personal commitment of converting to Islam and seeking political appointment under Samori. Most of his life he lived among the despised creoles of Sierra Leone and Liberia, where he unsuccessfully stood for the presidency in 1885. Blyden's praise of Islam is the positive counterpart to his negative attitude to the European penetration of West Africa.

Today we can only speculate whether West Africa would have suffered a better fate than Ethiopia if a century ago the Islamic Imam Samori Turé had held out against the European colonial conquerors like the Christian Emperor of Abyssinia, Menelik.

E

The Berlin Africa Conference:
A Hundred Years On



The Berlin Conference and the Expansion of Europe: A Conclusion

H. L. WESSELING

I

Paradoxes and problems, the Berlin Conference offers us plenty of them. In the first place there is the strange contrast between what one originally expects to find as the subject of discussions at Berlin and what was discussed in actual fact. The words 'Berlin Conference' have historical connotations. They suggest something in the tradition of the great diplomatic congresses of the nineteenth century, comparable to the congresses of Vienna, Paris, Berlin 1878. The very name Berlin conjures up the idea that something important happened.

Of course it was only due to some coincidence that the Conference took place on the banks of the Spree and not of the Seine. Or rather it was due to French prudence that suggested keeping a rather low profile at what was supposed to become an anti-British manifestation.¹ All the same, the place of the Conference, Berlin, seems to have a certain symbolic meaning. Here we are in the centre of power politics and world diplomacy at that time. President of the Conference is none other than Bismarck himself, *Realpolitiker par excellence*, master of diplomacy, connoisseur of power politics, architect of Germany's imperial power, father of coalitions, partitions, and wars.

But as soon as we start reading the Berlin Act and Protocols we know that we are in a very different world. This is not a conference like the Congress of 1878 or the Paris Conference of 1856. This is not the past but the future. It reminds one of the Peace Conference of The Hague, or the League of Nations or the United Nations. The political discourse is not that of power politics but of international law. The pros and cons of every word and sentence are discussed. The delegates carp at everything. Paragraphs are written and rewritten a dozen times. It is like the drafting of the resolutions of the United Nations. This is not the spirit of Machiavelli but of Hugo Grotius. One is reminded not of Otto von Bismarck but of Woodrow Wilson. To put it very briefly, it is immediately obvious that something very unimportant and something very unreal is going on. What makes it even more unreal, of course, is that we all know that if ever there was a period of power politics this was it. This period was to end with the great war of 1914. This Conference took place while a major international crisis was going on, the Anglo-Russian conflict in Afghanistan that was to come to a climax only a few weeks after the Conference and threatened to develop into the greatest war since the Crimean. The tragedy of Gordon at Khartoum had just taken place. For Britain, it was a desperate situation. As Lord Milner wrote: 'Everything, yes

¹ See the contribution by G. de Courcel in this volume.

absolutely everything, seemed bent upon going wrong at one and the same time.'² Or in the words of Granville, the Foreign Secretary, it was 'dreadful, jumping from one nightmare into another'.³ The French government also had serious problems. There was a stalemate in Madagascar and a difficult war was going on with China. The defeat of Langson was about to come. A few months later both the Gladstone and the Ferry cabinets would fall. Yet here we see these people seriously, slowly, and peacefully discussing matters of international law, codes of conduct, navigation acts, and postal unions. One should not be surprised that Bismarck lost all interest in the Conference, right from the start. His only role was to open and close it. Apart from that he was not to be seen, an intention which he made clear in the opening session.

Of course, another Berlin Conference was going on at the same time, not in the conference room but in the lobby. And here a different language was spoken—that of *Realpolitik*—and matters of practical importance were discussed. The Free State got its international recognition and its boundaries were fixed, albeit in a somewhat provisional way. When we discuss the meaning of the Berlin Conference, this side of it should, of course, be taken into account as well. But let us first return to the Conference itself and have a closer look at the diplomacy.

All the participating powers came to the Conference not only with aims concerning the official points of discussion as mentioned in the agenda, but also with considerations of wider imperial interest and of international politics in general. These considerations formed, as it were, three concentric circles of three different layers of interests, in order of importance. The African interest was subordinated to the imperial interest and that again to general diplomatic interests. This hierarchy of values is very clearly illustrated by the Dutch diplomacy at the Conference, a subject not further discussed here but nevertheless not wholly uninteresting. The first layer was that of the Congo problem itself. The Dutch had very considerable trading interests there. Dutch businessmen were organized in a powerful lobby. But the Foreign Minister told his representative at Berlin in no uncertain terms that these considerations were of less importance than the others, the imperial interests and the international situation. A major aim of Dutch diplomacy was to restrict the working of the Conference strictly to Africa. The great fear was that the decisions—for example those about effective occupation—would be given a more general significance and be considered as applicable to the Netherlands Indies as well. Restriction of the work of the Conference to Africa was therefore an important priority. But this, the imperial interest, was again subjected to the overruling priority of Dutch diplomacy, the maintenance of good relations with its two powerful neighbours: Germany in Europe and Britain in Asia. The Dutch position could be summarized as follows: one talked about Africa but one thought about Indonesia and was concerned about Europe.⁴

These three levels of interest are to be found with each power that had an interest at stake in the Conference. (There were of course nations represented in whose case it is difficult to find such interests at all, for example Sweden or Russia). For Britain there was the Congo itself—the British had a trading interest there. But more important was the Niger which was to be protected as a British sphere. Even more important were the

² Quoted in W. Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments, 1871-1890*, New York 1950, 2nd edn., p. 298.

³ Quoted *ibid.*, p. 313.

⁴ See H. L. Wesseling, 'The Netherlands and the Partition of Africa', in *Journal of African History*, 22 (1981), pp. 495-509.

imperial problems: Egypt, the Canal, and so on. Above all there was the international situation at large, the danger of a united German-French front, of a none too splendid isolation at a moment of deteriorating relations with Russia.

For France there was the Congo itself—Brazza's acquisitions had become a subject of national pride and grandeur. The greater interest of imperial strategy was of course dominated by France's desire to reopen the Egyptian question with the help of Germany. Finally there were considerations of international relations, the dilemma between continental and overseas priorities, the choice between Alsace-Lorraine and the colonies, or, as the popular poet and nationalist Paul Déroulède put it, between 'two lost sisters and twenty servants'.⁵

For Germany of course the priorities were even more obvious: even in his 'colonial year' (1884) Bismarck did not for a single moment forget that, as he said, his 'map of Africa was in Europe',⁶ that the empire would never be more than of very marginal interest to Germany. His colonial conversion has been discussed a hundred times. In essence the explanation seems to be quite simple and was perfectly formulated by Bismarck himself in a speech to the Reichstag of 26 January 1899, when he said of the German colonists: 'They cannot prove that it is useful for the Reich. I, however, cannot prove that it is harmful to it, either.'⁷ In such a situation the policy to follow is not difficult: grab what one can get at the lowest possible price and as long as it does not harm major political interests.

Thus we see with all the powers that general strategic considerations rather than African interests determined their African policy. This is what is so beautifully analysed and demonstrated for the British case in *Africa and the Victorians*.⁸ At the level of the official mind one sees the weighing of various interests. In this process the general political interests of the nation as seen by the decision-makers are what counts. Perhaps it is not a surprising conclusion, because it is, after all, what Foreign Secretaries and Cabinet Ministers are supposed to do: formulate the national interest and act accordingly. But it explains to a certain extent one of the most remarkable aspects of the Berlin Conference, that it seems to have been one of those rare things in world history, a competition with only winners, a lottery without blanks. Germany was satisfied. It had an interest in free trade in the Congo and that was guaranteed. It wanted to be taken seriously as a colonial power. That had been the cause of the friction with England in 1884 when the British had originally refused to do so. Now it got Britain's recognition. And even more: it received Gladstone's personal blessing. On 12 March 1885 he said in the Commons: 'If Germany is to become a colonising power, all I say is 'God speed her!' She becomes our ally and partner in the execution of the great purposes of Providence for the advantage of mankind.'⁹ Bismarck was not very impressed: he liked Gladstone about as much as Helmut Schmidt admired Jimmy Carter and must have fully agreed with Queen Victoria's judgement that he was 'an old, wild and incomprehensible man'.¹⁰

⁵ Quoted in R. Girardet, *L'Idée coloniale en France, 1871-1962*, Paris 1972, p. 63.

⁶ O. von Bismarck, *Die gesammelten Werke*, 15 vols., Berlin 1924-32, vol. 8, p. 646.

⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 13, p. 386.

⁸ R. Robinson and J. Gallagher, with A. Denny,

Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism, 2nd edn., London 1981.

⁹ Quoted in Langer, *European Alliances*, p. 308.

¹⁰ Quoted in R. R. James, *Rosebery*, New York 1963, p. 249.

For France the Conference was a success. Brazza's new colonial acquisitions—source of great French pride—had been secured. The pre-emptive right on the Free State's territories opened more possibilities for the future. Its nuisance value *vis-à-vis* Britain had been demonstrated. Its relation with Germany was improved, not fundamentally, but at least as far as possible.

Britain of course was the country against which the Conference was originally arranged. But it did very well and survived without great problems. Britain had nothing against free trade in the Congo. It was much more interested in the Niger and it had succeeded right from the beginning in obtaining an agreement that this river was not to be the subject of internationalization but considered part of the British sphere of interest. It had fought hard on the issue of effective occupation and the protectorate system. This issue was explicitly meant to be turned into an weapon against the supposed pretensions of a British Monroe doctrine for Africa. Even this fight it had won. And it had demonstrated that in so far as Africa was concerned, Germany had many more interests in common with Britain than with France. An anti-British Continental League had become very improbable.

The Conference was perhaps the greatest triumph for a state that was not even officially present there, the Congo Free State. It got its recognition and reached agreements on its boundaries with France and Portugal—as well as territorial recognition by Germany. Its existence was welcomed at the final session as a great step in the history of human civilization.

There *was* of course a loser at the Conference, namely Portugal. But there was nothing unusual in that. It would be hard to find any colonial success for Portugal in the entire nineteenth or for that matter even the eighteenth century. The history of Portuguese colonization since the seventeenth century is essentially a history of decline.

How was this possible? How was a conference possible that was a success for practically everybody? There are various reasons. In the first place much of what was considered to be a success was a success only in the supposition that the Berlin Act would be applied in actual practice. As is well known, this was not to be the case. Many of the arrangements were to be violated, particularly those concerning free trade and freedom of navigation. The Dutch traders, for example, were soon to find out that what they had welcomed and praised as a triumph for free trade was, in fact, a defeat of their trading interests. After that, they were no longer all that happy with the Berlin Conference. The second reason was that the various nations approached the African problems in different terms and therefore had different definitions of what was a success. Where the French were, generally speaking, more interested in political concepts, the British approach was a more commercial one. This made it possible to make bargains with both parties considered to be successes. This was the case not only in Berlin, but also with regard to later agreements, for example, the one between France and Britain on West Africa in 1898.¹¹

But there was another and more fundamental factor at work, one that was characteristic of the partition of Africa in general, namely the simple fact that there was indeed something for everybody. This is perhaps the most curious and unique aspect of the partition and of this stage of imperialism in general. There were, of course, fights

¹¹ For the 1898 agreement see C. Hirschfield, *The Diplomacy of Partition: Britain, France and the Creation of Nigeria, 1890-1898*, The Hague 1979.

and negotiations, bargains and deals. This was necessary if only for domestic reasons: one could not give away the national interest without a fight. But when all was said and done, there really was something for everybody. King Leopold's comparison of Africa with a 'magnificent cake'¹² was a very appropriate one, because it illustrated two important aspects of it at the same time. In the first place, there was no serious problem as long as there was a piece of cake for everybody. In the second place, the fight was about a cake, that is to say, about a luxury, not a vital need. The words of Brecht's *Dreigroschenoper* seem to be applicable: 'Es kann auch anders, aber so kann es auch.' This was an essential element of the Berlin Conference and of partition in general: these were not vital issues. Africa was not the Balkans, let alone Alsace-Lorraine. In his memoirs Bismarck devotes a full chapter to the Berlin Congress of 1878. He does not even mention the Conference of 1884.

Thus there was satisfaction for everybody, but was there really reason to be so satisfied? Here again we enter a world of paradoxes. Most of the decisions that were taken were not respected and the one proposal that was rejected was to have a certain impact after all. The Conference decided to guarantee freedom of trade in an immense region, the so-called Conventional Congo Basin. This was never implemented. Leopold promised to create a state without customs. The Congo State, however, was to become a state of monopolies and exclusive rights under the domanial system. There was to be freedom of navigation on the Congo and Niger rivers. This was never realized, neither on the Congo nor on the Niger where Sir George Goldie's Royal Niger Company had exclusive rights. There were long debates and high-spirited speeches about humanitarian ideals. The results, however, were disappointing. Maybe the image of the Free State is too much dominated by pictures of amputated hands and feet. But it could hardly be considered as a triumph of humanitarian ideals either. And then, of course, there was the famous fight about effective occupation. Here the text was so much watered down, by restricting it to new requisitions—thus not to old ones—to the *coasts* only—thus not to the interior—and to *occupations*—thus not to protectorates—that in fact it became meaningless. But the ultimate paradox is that although the principle was rejected, it nevertheless acquired some influence, because the principle of effective occupation was to gain a certain exemplary value, a normative meaning.¹³ The British victory on this issue was very much a Pyrrhic victory.

II

What then was the significance of the Berlin Conference? What role did it play in the partition? This is a question to which many answers have been given, of which I shall discuss only a few.

The first answer is a simple one: the Berlin Conference partitioned Africa; it drew the boundaries of the various European possessions. As Kwame Nkrumah put it: 'the original carve-up of Africa was arranged at the Berlin Conference of 1884'.¹⁴ It is a

¹² Quoted in J. Stengers, 'L'Impérialisme colonial et la fin du XIX^e siècle: mythe ou réalité?', in *Journal of African History*, 3 (1962), pp. 469–91, p. 490.

comment naît une légende', in *Zaire* (1953), pp. 839–44.

¹⁴ K. Nkrumah, *Challenge of the Congo*, New York 1967, p. x.

¹³ Cf. J. Stengers, 'A propos de l'Acte de Berlin, ou

theory that can still be heard today, even from serious authors like Basil Davidson.¹⁵ We might call this the 'myth of the Berlin Conference' because it is, of course, not true. The Conference itself drew only one boundary, that of the free trading zone. Some of the bilateral treaties between the powers and the Free State were signed during, though not actually at, the Conference. But there was only one—that with Germany, which had already been signed before the Conference—that was accompanied by a map indicating the territory of the Free State. The French and Portuguese treaties describe the boundaries between their possessions and those of the Free State. There was no 'carve-up' at the Berlin Conference.

The second theory is that of the Hinterland, a story still to be found in many textbooks, for example in the otherwise excellent book by R. R. Palmer *A History of the Modern World*. Palmer writes that 'a European power with holdings on the coasts had prior rights in the back country'.¹⁶ Nothing of this is to be found in the Berlin Act, but again it is a very persistent myth. Stengers has tried to trace back the origin of this theory. He found the first mention of it in a French textbook of 1918.¹⁷ But there are even older ones. The original source of it might be a popular German textbook of 1907, D. Schäfer's *Weltgeschichte der Neuzeit*.¹⁸ This exercise in historiography, interesting though it is, should not occupy us here.

The next theory is that the Berlin Conference laid down the 'ground rules' for the scramble or formulated the 'code of conduct' for the partition. It is true that the Berlin Act laid down a few general principles: two articles out of the thirty-eight of the General Act are devoted to them. These articles, however, are not directives for partition, but diplomatic precautions to avoid international problems. Another very popular metaphor is that the Berlin Conference 'fired the starting gun for the partition'. These kinds of literary formulations are always rather flexible, but if this was a start it was a false one because most of the runners were already well under way. If the Conference tried to do anything it was rather to call back the competitors. It was, to use W. J. Mommsen's phrase, a 'holding operation'. But it was a holding operation that failed.¹⁹

Thus our conclusion is that the Conference did not partition Africa, nor did it want to do so. We might even agree that the Conference was not such an important thing after all, important enough for a commemoration, but not a major event in world history or in the history of Africa. Quite a few of the contributors to this volume have argued along these lines. It is an attitude of unusual modesty because normally when historians discuss a topic—whether it be the battles of Napoleon or the fertility of fishermen's wives in seventeenth-century Brittany—they tend to believe that their subject is the single most important problem in world history. Let us congratulate ourselves on this modesty and dignity!

There is, however, something that is not completely satisfactory in all this playing down of the importance of the Berlin Conference. Politics are not only about facts but

¹⁵ Very recently, for example, in an interview with a Dutch newspaper. See *Volkskrant*, 17 Nov. 1984. One of the most absurd examples of the myth of the Berlin Conference is to be found in Lord F. Brockway's *The Colonial Revolution*, London 1973, in which he expresses the belief that even the division of New Guinea was decided at the Berlin Conference (pp. 117 and 129)!

¹⁶ R. R. Palmer, *A History of the Modern World*, New York 1971, 4th edn., p. 690.

¹⁷ Cf. Stengers, 'Acte de Berlin', p. 841.

¹⁸ D. Schäfer, *Weltgeschichte der Neuzeit*, 2 vols., Berlin 1908, 3rd edn., vol. 2, p. 340.

¹⁹ See his contribution to this volume.

also about the perception of facts. To give just one example, politically speaking the important question is not whether Britain really wanted to keep France out of Africa but whether France thought so and acted accordingly. When the Conference was convened politicians and public opinion expected something important to happen. The partition was supposed to be on the agenda. A Dutch newspaper made a comparison between Bismarck and the pope who in the fifteenth century divided the world and gave away continents. In the same way, the journal continued, 'Bismarck is carving up a continent and in a fair manner gives away empires and states'.²⁰ In a literal sense, this was not true. But what was true, was that the partition was taking place at high speed and under the supervision of the European heads of state and government. The misunderstanding was that people thought the partition took place at Berlin. In fact, it took place on the shores of Africa, but under the instructions of the same statesmen who instructed their representatives in Berlin. Politically speaking, the role of the Berlin Conference was not to do the partitioning itself, but to draw the attention of the world to this process and to legitimize it. Historically speaking, the meaning of the Berlin Conference is that it represents the partition in a symbolic form.

In this respect it could be compared with another conference and another partition that was also commemorated in February 1985, the Yalta Conference of 1945 and the partition of Germany and Europe. Here we find the theory that the present division of Europe was planned and agreed upon at the Yalta Conference. This is also a myth, and again a persistent one. The powers did not agree on partition; it was a result of power politics and military developments, not of Yalta. But Yalta did not stop this process, and Berlin did not stop the partition, indeed rather accelerated it. Berlin and Yalta brought about a new awareness of what was going on: a continent was divided by powers that did not belong to it. For this reason they have symbolic value. 'Yalta' became shorthand for the Cold War and the division of Europe, 'Berlin' for imperialism and the partition of Africa. Historical imagination and narration need such symbols.

What then is the meaning of the events of 1884-5? In retrospect they seem very much to be a turning point, a watershed in the history of British imperialism and that of the partition of Africa. They mark the end of an era that could be labelled 'the post-Napoleonic era'. It is amazing how much the history of Britain's paramountcy in the nineteenth century reminds one of the US in the twentieth. Both were based on economic superiority. Both supremacies only became manifest after wars to which, originally, they had not been a party. Both used the instruments of naval power and informal empire. Both preferred informal to formal empire. Both originally profited from the absence of serious competition: before 1870 Germany did not exist, nor did Italy. Austria and Russia were essentially continental powers and they were haunted by domestic problems. France had no naval power of any importance. As for the US, after 1945 Japan and Germany were defeated, Russia was victorious but badly wounded, Europe was a shambles. By 1980 the picture was very different for the US: the Soviet Union had become a major power, Europe was restored, Japan had become more of a rival than it had ever been. The same was true of Britain in the 1880s: the US, Japan, and especially Germany had become economic rivals, Russia was a danger. In 1885 a

²⁰ *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 21 Nov. 1884.

naval scare went through England. The very basis of its empire was threatened. Finally British imperialism was to be badly damaged by a war that was more of a domestic and political crisis than a military one. In this respect the Vietnam war can be compared to the South African war of 1899–1902. In 1914 the bell tolled for the British Empire. But in 1885 the writing was already on the wall.

1885 was also a turning point in the history of the partition of Africa. Here of course we enter a great debate, the one about the causes and the chronology of the scramble. This debate essentially comes down to two questions: why did the scramble take place when it did, and in the way it did?²¹ But there is a preliminary question: when did the scramble take place? Here the discussion is about the beginning. That the scramble was over by about 1912 is no matter for discussion. But its beginning is a far more complicated issue. Historians have taken different positions on this. Many years and events have been suggested: 1884, because of the Anglo-Portuguese treaty; the ratification of the Brazza–Makoko treaties in November 1882; the British occupation of Egypt earlier that year; the French occupation of Tunisia in 1881 or the forward policy introduced in French West Africa in 1879. The importance of this debate does not of course lie in the finding of the exact date but in the fact that every date implies a certain theory about the causes of or the responsibility for the scramble.

I do not deny that these are important problems and debates but I would also suggest that their significance should not be overestimated. It is perhaps possible to find out what was the very first beginning of the scramble but that does not mean that we have also found its *prima causa*. In mechanics one can indicate the first shock—and all that follows is predictable and can be traced back to it. But history is not like mechanics. Even if we find original initiatives these say very little about what has followed. Imperialist acquisitions were not the result of one decision but of a chain of decisions, a chain with at least three links: the local activities and possibilities, the actions and reactions of the government and the attitudes of public opinion, press, and parliament. Between these three factors there was a permanent interaction and feedback. One element was useless without the others and, as with all chains, the chain was only as strong as its weakest link. That is to say, the partitioning process could begin, but also be stopped, at every level. Cameron annexed the Congo for the British government in 1874. The only reaction of the Foreign Office was: ‘an interesting proposal but of no practical use for our generation’.²² That was the end of it. Maybe a few years later the French government would have liked to treat Brazza’s annexation of the Congo for France in the same way, but by that time public opinion and Parliament in France would not have accepted such an attitude. Neither the local nor the metropolitan factor alone was decisive—their interaction was. Many imperialist operations originated in local initiatives, in local crises, subimperialisms, protonationalisms, and what have you. But this does not mean that these initiatives automatically developed into imperialist annexations. They could be stopped by politicians and indeed they were stopped many times. Lord Derby scorned the ambitions of the Australians who wanted to have virtually the whole of the Pacific: ‘I asked them whether they did not want another planet all to themselves and they did not want another planet all to themselves

²¹ Cf. G. N. Sanderson, ‘The European Partition of Africa: Coincidence or Conjunction?’, in *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 3 (1974), pp. 1–54.

²² Cf. R. Anstey, *Britain and the Congo in the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford 1961, pp. 54 ff.

and they seemed to think it would be a desirable arrangement if only feasible. The magnitude of their ideas is appalling to the English mind.'²³ These subimperialists did not get what they wanted. On the other hand governments could do very little when there were no local activities or when there was opposition in Parliament.

What I intend to say is that we should be careful with such concepts as scramble and partition. They are not things that existed in reality, but constructions of the mind, historical concepts, interpretations. That is perfectly all right. Historians cannot do without a certain 'realism' in the philosophical sense of the word. But one should realize that because these are constructions of the mind and not processes in nature, there are no laws of causation that link one event to another. Therefore the search for a *prima causa* of the partition is useless.

What, however, we could probably agree upon is a certain chronological scheme, a framework. We can then distinguish a first or initial phase from 1879 to 1885; a second stage—the heyday of partition—from 1885 to 1895, and an epilogue from 1895 to 1912. In this sense 1885 was the point of no return. But such a scheme, of course, is only an analytical tool, an instrument to aid understanding of a complex reality.

Such a scheme cannot explain why the scramble happened when it did, but it can help us in analysing the conditions that had to be fulfilled in order to make it possible, although not inevitable. Thus the medical requirements for survival in Africa had to be created and there had to be the military and technical superiority of Europe to make the price to be paid for the partition an acceptable one. These conditions were not fulfilled in the early nineteenth century. But there was another condition, too, a political one. The two characteristics of the partition period—as compared with earlier and later years—were (1) that there was something for everybody; and (2) that everybody wanted something from Africa. Thus we can determine the time-limits of the partition. The first characteristic disappeared about 1914—when Africa was partitioned. The second one only came into being after 1870. Before that the political conditions for such a situation were not fulfilled: Germany and Italy had not yet been unified and France had no motive for getting seriously involved in these matters. There was nobody to challenge Britain's informal empire and thus there was no partition. But all this does not mean that after that the partition *had* to happen. Politics is the realm of freedom, as Hegel said.

The other question is not of chronology but of typology. The partition was one form of imperialism among others. The question is: why did imperialism in Africa take this form rather than another? Let us then first see what is typical about imperialism in Africa. The most interesting thing about the partition was not that it began but that it was never stopped. Once the partitioning had started one partitioned and partitioned until there was nothing left to partition. Why did this happen? The best way to answer this question is perhaps by asking another one: what could have stopped it? There are two possible answers to this: (1) a massive resistance by Africans; or (2) a major international crisis. Both would have raised the price of the partition to an unacceptable level. None of these occurred. Why not? Why was Africa partitioned while China was not? Why did the First World War break out because of a problem in the Balkans and not in Africa?

²³ Quoted in Langer, *European Alliances*, p. 295.

History is about what happened, not about what did not happen. That is why there are hundreds of books on the partition of Africa and thousands of studies on the causes of the First World War. But there are practically no studies on the question of why China was not partitioned nor on the question of why the scramble for Africa did not lead to war between the European powers. These questions are in a way unanswerable. Still, these comparisons can help us to understand what did happen. The partition of China was very much in the minds of men at the end of the nineteenth century. It was supposed to be imminent. Men spoke of the 'Africanization of China'. But it did not take place. To some extent of course the reason for this was domestic. China was a highly centralized polity, an empire. In Africa there was nothing like that.²⁴ But there is another side to it as well: the international situation was different. Russia was on the march in East Asia and approached China overland. Japan became an imperial power as early as the 1890s. The US took an interest in China and preached the gospel of the open door. Nothing of this happened in Africa. Here the Europeans were, as it were, on their own, amongst themselves. Here they could re-enact their European policies in a new and different context.

The partition of Africa was in the 'best' tradition of European politics: it was about territorialization, about borders and boundaries. We often speak of the 'artificial boundaries of Africa', but were they any more artificial than the European ones? In a way the partition was nothing but the entire history of Europe since the Middle Ages all over again, but in a condensed form: 400 years of history repeated within 30 years! But there was one great difference: in European history annexations and wars were followed by peace treaties, boundaries, and maps. In Africa, they started with maps and treaties and war came later, if at all. And if war came, it was not among Europeans but between Europeans and Africans. This explains one of the most curious phenomena of the partition, its peacefulness. Most of the partition took place between 1885 and 1895. When one looks at the map of 1895 in Keltie's *Partition of Africa* one sees that by then the partition was nearly complete.²⁵ On the other hand, we know that the decade 1885-95 was the most peaceful in modern history. In the great statistical study on war by Singer and Small we see, for example, that in that period there was only one great war (between China and Japan) and one smaller war (between the Congo State and the Arabic slave traders).²⁶ This is to say that during the partition itself there were practically no European or colonial wars.

There are two possible explanations for this strange phenomenon. In the first place there is the danger of a conceptual fallacy: maybe the application of violence as used in Africa did not fit with the criteria of traditional war, was therefore not classified as such and thus not counted. But there is another explanation as well, namely that during the heyday of partition very little actually happened in Africa. What these maps illustrate is not reality but fiction. They illustrate the agreements on boundaries as reached in European chanceries and offices, not the occupation itself. This came later and cannot be dated so easily.

This order of things was very different from European history. It was not so much European history repeated as European history upside down. In European history there is first annexation, war, and so on and finally there are maps that represent the

²⁴ Cf. J. Hargreaves's contribution to this volume.

²⁵ J. S. Keltie, *The Partition of Africa*, London 1903.

²⁶ Cf. J. D. Singer and M. Small, *The Wages of War, 1816-1965: A Statistical Handbook*, New York 1972.

result of all this. In Africa the maps came first, maps that in the beginning represented nothing but themselves. Normally a map is a representation of reality in a realistic or coded form. Not so 'The Map of Africa by Treaty'. Here there was no reality to be represented. Here, to use a well-known expression from the 1960s, 'the medium was the message'.

This explains much of the peacefulness of the 1885-95 decade. Not much happened except on paper. It also explains why the Europeans could so easily avoid getting involved in major conflicts. Territorial questions were settled in advance. Moreover, these were arrangements about regions that those involved did not know and certainly did not care much about. All this lightheartedness is perfectly illustrated in a speech by Lord Salisbury in the Lords in 1890, where he said: 'I will not dwell upon the respective advantages of places which are utterly unknown not only to your Lordships, but to the rest of the white human race.'²⁷ Africa was 'very light soil' indeed! The rivalry between Russia and Britain on the North West Frontier was known as the Great Game. But compared to Africa, this was not a game, but business. In Africa—apart from the Mediterranean—European rivalry never became more than a game.

III

What the authors of this volume are trying to do—in one way or another—is to analyse the decisions of the Congo Conference and the considerations that led to these decisions. In so doing they are continuing the work done by the many historians who over the last twenty-five years or so have tried to analyse the decision-making process that led to partition. But when we know the answers to these questions, do we then know the *causes* of the partition? Let me, to illustrate the problem, give another example of the same sort of question. When we have reconstructed the decisions and patterns of thinking of the Kaiser and the Czar, of Poincaré and Bethmann Hollweg, do we then know the causes of the First World War? The answer is obviously no.

In *Africa and the Victorians*, Gallagher and Robinson faced the same problem when writing their conclusion. Their answer to this is that 'the subjective views of the British practitioners . . . were one of the many objective causes of the partition itself'.²⁸ I would prefer to put it a little differently. I would say that when moving from motives to causes we enter a different field of analysis altogether. The French would say we use a different historical *discours*. For many historical problems our discussion is exclusively an analysis in terms of causes and consequences: we discuss the causes of the fall of the Roman Empire, the rise of the middle class, the industrial revolution, and so on. In analysing political problems we begin with a different type of analysis, one in terms of motives and men. In political history we see men trying to change the destiny of the world and we want to understand what they did and why. But this reconstruction of the past as *expérience vécue*, as it was consciously lived by contemporaries, is only one part of the historical explanation. Doing history is essentially making sense of the past and in this exercise we not only look at the past as it was seen by contemporaries, but also as

²⁷ Quoted in Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians*, p. 303.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 466

we see it now, knowing what they did not know and using concepts that they had not heard of. In this sense the historian's work is based on anachronism. We know that by 1885 Britain's power was already on the decline. In 1885 some people feared or hoped that it was but they did not know. We know that the beginning of the expansion of Europe coincided with a secular trend of economic growth (Braudel's 'long sixteenth century' or Simiand's 'Phase A'). This is something that neither Columbus nor Vasco da Gama knew—nor would they probably have cared very much. Nevertheless these are perfectly acceptable and indeed acceptable historical categories.

What I am saying is that we have been discussing one side of the story: men making history. But there is another side to it as well: history making men. In the eighteenth century Britain became the leader of the world economy. In the nineteenth century she was for a while mistress of the world. Britain attained this position—to use a phrase from Dale Carnegie's well-known guides to success—'without really trying'. She was soon to lose it, and tried very hard to get it back. But in vain. The same is true of the Dutch Republic a century earlier. Colbert, to give another example, tried very hard to industrialize France, but he failed. A century later the *manufactures* came into being spontaneously. History is the result of what people try to do and what time permits, of personal and impersonal forces. The historian's task is to make sense of the past and in so doing he will use both forms of historical explanation, the personal and the impersonal, the motives-and-men as well as the causes-and-consequences approach. When we now look at the partition of Africa not from the personal but from the impersonal forces perspective we find two different stories, depending on whether the vantage point is primarily political or economic. We also get two different chronologies.

Politically speaking the partition was a period of transformation. It was the prelude to colonial rule. Full colonialism came to Africa in about 1914. By that time Africa was almost entirely under colonial rule. But the colonial period was a very short one—particularly in the time perspective of a continent where the cradle of humanity stood. It lasted only half a century. By the end of the 1960s it was virtually over. Short as it may have been, however, it was a very painful period in African history. The loss of sovereignty and dignity, the subordination to the rule of 'alien races' as our nineteenth century colleagues used to say, were a sad page in the book of African history. In this respect decolonization was a major change.

Economically speaking however this period does not seem to be such an important phase in European colonialism. As seen from the post-colonial perspective the period was in fact only a rather unimportant stage in a much longer process. This process brought about the incorporation of Africa into the world economy and the spread of industrial civilization over the continent. From this point of view the partition was not a major episode. The major events came later. The transfer from commercial to economic exploitation took place in the 1920s and these years were more of a watershed than the 1880s. On the other hand decolonization did not bring an end to this process. On the contrary, dependency and interconnection became all the greater.

As seen from the perspective of world history the partition of Africa was just a chapter of a much bigger story, that of the partition of the world, and the late nineteenth century only an episode in a long-term process that lasted for a few centuries. This process could simply be called the division of the world or the expansion of Europe

and it started long ago. The first division of the world took place in about 1500. In 1492 Columbus discovered America and in 1498 Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope. 'This', as Fernand Braudel said, 'forced on Europe an extremely grave choice: either to make use of Christopher Columbus' discovery and opt for America, or to exploit the discovery of the continuous sea links round the Cape of Good Hope to its limits and batten on to Asia.'²⁹ Europe did both and even at the same time, but the results were quite different. In the rather empty world of the Americas it founded New Spain, New England, New France, and so on. In short, it created a new Europe, Europe overseas, better known as the 'New World'. This was Europe's long-standing achievement. Perhaps it was the greatest creative enterprise in the entire history of Europe. In Asia something very different happened. Here the Europeans faced densely populated regions, highly centralized polities, complicated and sophisticated trading networks. Europe joined the game of Asian trade but it never took over. It tapped the riches of Asia but it did not change the fabric of Asian society—at least not in this first stage, before the industrial revolution.

This then was the first division of the world. Next to the old world of Europe, Africa, and Asia, there was now a New World. But this division did not last out when, after the eighteenth century, the world was going through the greatest transformation it has known, the industrial revolution. This created a new dichotomy and a new world order. A part of the old world, Europe, abandoned the old pattern of life. In this it was followed by the New World. Europe and America joined to become the developed world. Asia and Africa were left as the world of the old order. This new dichotomy—and this was the important thing—was hierarchical, one between superior and inferior. Europe was able to exploit Asia, which had not been the case before.

In both periods Africa was touched very little by European expansion. During the first period, it was mostly uninhabitable for Europeans and thus offered no opportunity for creating a new world as in America. It did not have a large trading network for Europeans to join nor ready-made riches to exploit, as did Asia. Its major commodity was manpower, that is to say slaves. In the second, the industrial period, it did not offer many profitable opportunities for investments in agriculture or industry, nor was it a market comparable to those of Asia. Libya is about as big as the Dutch East Indies, the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan only some 10 per cent smaller than India. All the same nobody will argue that they were of the same interest for European colonialists. Up to the First World War, apart from Algeria and South Africa, no colony in Africa was comparable to the European possessions in Asia. There might have been imperialism in Africa. The expansion of Europe took place in America and, although to a lesser extent, in Asia.

What, then, should be our conclusion on European colonialism and European expansion? As for colonialism, the same verdict seems to be applicable as Montesquieu pronounced on the history of slavery: 'an institution implying misery and destitution for great numbers while it made life easier for just a few but eventually was of real use to nobody at all'.³⁰

²⁹ F. Braudel, 'The Expansion of Europe and the "longue durée"', in H. L. Wesseling (ed.), *Expansion and Reaction*, Leiden 1978, pp. 17-30, p. 18.

³⁰ Quoted in A. Wirz, *Sklaverei und kapitalistisches Weltsystem*, Frankfurt 1984, p. 214.

Is the same verdict true for the expansion of Europe? Up to a point, yes. It brought about a great deal of misery for the coloured peoples and it created an economic hierarchization of the world that today even the privileged do not feel very happy about. But while creating hierarchies, that is to say differentiation, it also brought about a certain uniformization. It can hardly be denied that the industrial revolution brought about an immense improvement in productivity. It is also true that industrial civilization produces commodities that somehow have universal attraction: coco-cola, hamburgers, transistors and so on. It has also created a superficial, maybe not very attractive but none the less universal, popular culture of pop and rock, of 'Dallas' and 'Dynasty'. The world has become a village, as Marshall McLuhan said some time ago. And finally the expansion of Europe brought about a new system of values. Whether they are respected or not, liberty, equality, fraternity, democracy, and socialism have become almost universally accepted values. Our European forefathers of the nineteenth century who were closer to the Enlightenment than we are, were also more straightforward in their conviction of moral superiority. That was the missionary aspect of European imperialism, so perfectly illustrated by the following quotation: 'We will never in any circumstances be able to relinquish our responsibility to support with all our might the spread of enlightenment and civilisation to the remotest depths of the jungle.'³¹ This quotation, however, does not come from any European book but from an essay called *The Philosophy of the Revolution* published by the Egyptian statesman Nasser in 1955. Thus this philosopher of the revolution was also a child of the Enlightenment. And so are we all, Africans and Europeans—disappointed, yes, and less self-conscious, but all the same children of the Enlightenment.

³¹ G. A. Nasser, *Egypt's Liberation: The Philosophy of the Revolution*, Washington 1955, p. 70.

The Results of the Berlin West Africa Conference: An Assessment

G. N. UZOIGWE

INTRODUCTION: THE MEANING OF THE CONFERENCE AND THE BERLIN ACT

In 1942, Sybil E. Crowe published the first and major study of the Berlin West Africa Conference. Interest in Crowe's study was enhanced by the fact that her father was one of Britain's delegates at the Conference. In this landmark study she made certain observations regarding the significance of the Conference and the Berlin Act. She argued, *inter alia*, that the Conference did not partition Africa; that as a legal document the Berlin Act was not noteworthy; that the Conference brought about an era of strict trade monopolies in Africa which negated its desire to ensure free trade in the basins of the Niger and the Congo rivers; and that the Conference's effective occupation resolutions were 'as empty as Pandora's box'.¹ In short, it was Crowe's belief that the Conference was a failure.

We shall argue, in the course of this paper, that Crowe failed to capture the essential meaning of the Conference and the Berlin Act precisely because her work was strictly an exercise in European diplomatic history in the second half of the nineteenth century. Had she looked at the pattern of European expansion since the beginning of the seventeenth century when the concept of Europe became much more than a geographical expression, and when European determination to impose its civilization on the non-European world and to exploit the latter's resources became a passion, Crowe would certainly have seen the significance of the Berlin West Africa Conference in a different light. Had she also gone beyond the European diplomatic consequences of the Conference, she would probably have not regarded the Conference as a failure.

With due respect to Crowe's study, therefore, the Berlin West Africa Conference is a landmark in world history. Never before, in the history of mankind, had a concert of one continent gathered together to plan how to share out another continent without the knowledge of the latter's leaders. It was a dangerous precedent which, thankfully, has never been followed up. I am not suggesting, of course, that such a conference may never take place again. On the contrary, the current menacing postures of the super powers, if not ameliorated by dialogue and disarmament, may lead, in the twenty-first century, if not to nuclear war, then more likely to a formal partition of the world by them. If that happens, the Berlin West Africa Conference would certainly have served as an unfortunate historic precedent.

Whatever the Conference may have been, it was certainly not a meeting of humanitarians. On the contrary, the European activities in Africa after 1885 were a negation

¹ S. E. Crowe, *The Berlin West African Conference, 1884-1885*, London 1942, pp. 3-4, 103, 152-75.

of the lofty humanitarian idealism which the concert of Europe claimed animated its proceedings. Such a claim, as it turned out, was a cover for mundane economic motives. On this point Crowe and I are in complete agreement. The bloody nature of the subsequent conquest of Africa and the utterly callous manner in which African leaders who contested either the seizure of their lands or the introduction of Christianity were treated, showed no trace of humanitarianism whatsoever. It would seem that the signatory powers at Berlin were more interested in protecting one another's nationals in Africa and in enforcing the concept of religious freedom only with respect to Christianity and, to some extent, Islam, than in behaving decently towards Africans. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that African religions were not conceded any legitimacy and that unsuccessful efforts were made to obliterate them. Even the provision about the slave trade was too studiously vague to be meaningful.

A major significance of the Berlin Act which Crowe failed to grasp was the effect it had of denying sovereignty to those states which Europeans considered backward. It is true that most of the delegates carefully avoided discussion of this question. Bismarck made sure that it was not given prominence when he stated in his opening remarks that delegates had not been assembled to discuss matters of sovereignty either of African states or of the European powers in Africa. The question, nevertheless, came up at the Conference. It was raised by Kasson, the United States plenipotentiary. First, he wished to know, 'if it would be suitable to lay down explicitly the intentions of the Conference to respect, in a general way, the rights of the native chiefs in the region traced by the Acts'; and second, he asserted that 'modern international law follows closely a line which leads to the recognition of the right of native tribes to dispose freely of themselves and of their hereditary territory' and, 'in conforming with these principles', he insisted on this principle of 'voluntary consent of the natives whose country is taken possession of, in all cases where they had not provoked the aggression'.² The delegates, sensing the wide implications of Kasson's question and statement, resolutely refused to discuss sovereignty. The German delegate Busch summarized the general sentiment of his colleagues as follows: '... the declaration of Mr. Kasson touched on delicate questions, upon which the conference hesitated to express opinion'.³ They were quite aware that if Kasson's question and views were debated freely, the Conference would end up rendering itself illegitimate—which, in any case, it was—and the idea of the 'Third Basis' would have been rendered useless.

The Berlin Act, therefore, was not a legal instrument; it was a political and economic one. Africa was not uninhabited; the Europeans were aware of that fact. Their dealings with African leaders prior to Berlin, especially in relation to treaty-making, had convinced them that African states possessed sovereignty. Reflecting on the above points several years ago I wrote:

Far from being a landmark in international law, the Berlin Act was yet another landmark in positive law, which sees force as the basis of all law. As far as the imperialists were concerned, the African states lacked creditable military power strong enough to stop them. The Berlin Conference simply re-emphasized the well known doctrine of Plato's Thrasymachus that right is the protection of the 'interest of the stronger'. In the nineteenth century, Europe was militarily

² Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers (Africa, no. 4). 4361, Protocol, 31 Jan. 1885. *Protocols and General Act of the West African Conference*, C. ³ Ibid.

stronger than Africa and nineteenth century European imperialism was a function of force actually used against Africans but only threatened to be used against themselves.⁴

As to why nineteenth century Europeans should arrogate to themselves the right to seize other people's lands, the international lawyer, John Westlake, supplied the classic statement:

The inflow of the white race cannot be stopped where there is land to cultivate, or to be minded, commerce to be developed, sport to enjoy, curiosity to be satisfied. If any fanatical admirer of savage life argued that the whites ought to be kept out, he would only be driven to the same conclusion by another route, for a government on the spot would be necessary to keep them out. Accordingly international law has to treat natives as uncivilised. It regulates, for the mutual benefit of civilised states, the claims which they make to sovereignty over the region and leaves the treatment of the natives to the conscience of the state to which the sovereignty is awarded, rather than sanction their interest being made an excuse the more for war between civilised claimants, devastating the region and the cause of suffering to the natives themselves.⁵

Although this view is more racist than legal, Westlake was representing popular nineteenth-century opinion.

The Berlin Act had the effect of partitioning Africa on paper. It was not, of course, the Conference's initial intention to engage in a general partition of Africa. But it ended up, nevertheless, appropriating territory and laying down 'the rules to be observed in future' for further partition and conquest. For example, the Conference recognized the Congo Free State; it endorsed the doctrines of the hinterland, spheres of influence, and effective occupation. By so doing it laid down the broad lines for the partition of Africa on paper. To argue, therefore, as some have done, that the Berlin West Africa Conference did not partition Africa is incorrect.⁶

In the final analysis, the Berlin West Africa Conference was a European economic summit conference. After the rhetoric about humanitarian intentions, the slave trade, and 'civilization' of Africa are erased from the Berlin Act, what is left are naked economic motives—'the development of trade', the elimination of trade monopolies, free navigation, and avoidance of 'disputes which might arise from new acts of occupation . . .'. The major deliberations of the Conference centred around the above issues. In any case, contemporary African opinion was in no doubt as to what the Conference was all about. The *Lagos Observer* (19 February 1885) summarized this opinion: 'The world had, perhaps, never witnessed a robbery on so large a scale. Africa is helpless to prevent it . . . It is on the card that the "Christian" business can only end, at no distant date, in the annihilation of the natives.' In 1891 another editor of a Lagos newspaper, reflecting on the legacy of Berlin wrote, linking the partition with the slave trade: 'A forcible possession of our land has taken the place of a forcible possession of our person.' In 1905, Nigeria's Herbert Macaulay underscored the economic motive for the partition thus: 'The dimensions of the "true interests of the natives at heart" are algebraically equal to the length, breadth and depth of

⁴ G. N. Uzoigwe, 'Spheres of Influence and the Doctrine of the Hinterland in the Partition of Africa', in *Journal of African Studies*, 3 (1976), pp. 183-204, p. 203.

⁵ J. Westlake, *International Law*, Cambridge 1894, pp. 142-3.

⁶ Crowe, *Berlin West African Conference*, pp. 152-75; J. D. Hargreaves, *Prelude to the Partition of West Africa*, London 1963, p. 337; B. Emerson, *Leopold II of the Belgians: King of Colonialism*, New York 1979, p. 113.

the whiteman's pocket.' And not to be outdone, a Gold Coast (Ghana) newspaper of the period penned this parody of a famous Christian hymn:

Onward Christian soldiers unto heathen lands:
Prayer books in your pockets, rifles in your hands:
Take the happy tidings where trade can be done:
Spread the peaceful gospel with the gatling gun.⁷

The Concert of Europe was not amused. And perhaps anticipating that the scramble for and partition and conquest of Africa would evoke the above bitter reactions from Africans, the *Manchester Guardian*, with a straight face, had offered this lame excuse, standing the history of the expansion of England on its head: 'It is not the habit of the English people to set out with their eyes open on a career of conquest and annexation. The conquests which we make are forced upon us.'⁸ This was a general view held by all the imperialist powers. The implication was, therefore, that Africans were responsible for their own conquest! This may appear ironic and paradoxical but there is an element of truth in that contention: had the Africans been strong and united, neither the scramble nor the Berlin West Africa Conference nor the partition would have taken place.

We shall now turn attention to assessing the results of the Berlin West Africa Conference. It is interesting to note that in spite of the avalanche of studies on the 'Partition of Africa', no serious effort has been made to analyse the results of the Conference that worked out the modalities for such a historic decision. Because of space limitations no efforts will be made to assess in any depth the results of the Conference in Europe. Such an assessment, however, is very much overdue. Nevertheless, the emphasis here will be on Africa. In a broad sense, in fact, the post-1885 history of Africa is essentially a legacy of the Berlin Act. I propose, however, to highlight only the following results that have helped to transform the African continent in the twentieth century: the transformation of the map of Africa; Pan-Africanism, Nationalism, and Ethnicity; the spread of Christianity and Western education; economic dependency; and boundary disputes and secessionist movements.

1. THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE MAP OF AFRICA

The Berlin West Africa Conference had the immediate result of turning the scramble for Africa into a territorial steeplechase. But it also brought a measure of order and purpose to a movement that was increasingly becoming anarchic and would have led to a European conflagration if nothing had been done. In 1878, as F. H. Hinsley has correctly observed,⁹ Europe made a decisive shift towards an extra-European age—an age of imperialism. From that year, at the Congress of Berlin, British rivalries with Russia in the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire brought European nations to the very brink of war. This crisis in power politics was averted by European statesmen who drew back from that brink. Power politics from that point to the Bosnian Crisis (1908)

⁷ Cited in Uzoigwe, 'Spheres of Influence', p. 200.

⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, 7 Apr. 1884.

⁹ F. H. Hinsley, 'International Rivalry in the Colonial Sphere, 1869-1885', in E. A. Benians *et al.* (eds.), *The*

Cambridge History of the British Empire, 8 vols., Cambridge 1929-63, vol. 3: *The Empire—Commonwealth, 1870-1919*, Cambridge 1959, pp. 95-127; Hinsley, 'International Rivalry, 1885-1895', in *ibid.*, pp. 255-92.

were exiled from Europe and played out in Africa and Asia. Thus, when conflicting interests threatened to destroy Europe's collective *amour propre*, the concert of Europe (at the initiative of Portugal, the aged sick man of Europe) decided to assemble at the official residence of Germany's Prince Bismarck in the Wilhelmstrasse, the venue of the Congress of Berlin in 1878, to work out the modalities for settling its differences in Africa. The outcome of the Conference, therefore, had the direct result of preserving the European diplomatic balance that had stabilized itself by the early 1880s. In short, the Conference preserved European peace and stability for about a generation.

For Africa, on the other hand, the Conference initiated the process of formal colonialism and thus ushered in a generation of wars, instability, and revolutionary change. The idea of formal colonialism is embodied in what is known as the 'Third Basis' of the Berlin Act. The practical application of the 'Third Basis' not only influenced the final partition and conquest of Africa but also led to the transformation of the map of Africa. The 'Third Basis' enunciated two important doctrines as follows:

Any Power which henceforth takes possession of a tract of land on the coasts of the African Continent outside of its present possessions, or which, being hitherto without such possessions, shall acquire them, as well as the Powers which assume a Protectorate there, shall accompany the respective act with a notification thereof, addressed to the other Signatory Powers of the present Act in order to enable them, if need be, to make good any claims of their own. [Article 34]¹⁰

The Signatory Powers of the present Act recognise the obligation to insure the establishment of authority in regions occupied by them on the coasts of the African Continent sufficient to protect existing rights, and, as the case may be, freedom of trade and of transit under the conditions agreed upon. [Article 35]¹¹

Embedded in these articles are the famous doctrines of spheres of influence, hinterland, and effective occupation.¹²

The notion of a sphere of influence is, of course, of considerable antiquity. But it was popularized by the Berlin Act which made a distinction between exercising 'influence' and exercising 'sovereign rights'.¹³ Thereafter, the doctrine usually became the first stage in the occupation of African territory. If a claim to a sphere of influence by one country was properly notified to the others according to the stipulation of the Act, and the notification was uncontested by the other signatory countries, the said country quietly turned its claim into a sovereign right. This is how Italy annexed Tripoli (1911-12). Usually, however, the recognition of a sphere of influence was a gentlemen's agreement between those operating in a given region not to interfere in one another's sphere. In short, the notion of a sphere of influence was a political rather than a legal one. As the United States Secretary of State put it in 1896: the notion was 'unknown to international law, and do [sic] not as yet rest upon any recognized principles of either international or municipal law'.¹⁴ Thus, while an unfriendly country might choose to ignore it, a friendly one might choose to respect it. Where disagreements arose, as happened in many cases, the disputes were settled at bilateral

¹⁰ The Berlin Act, Preamble, in: Sir E. Hertslet, *The Map of Africa by Treaty*, 3 vols., vol. 1, London 1896, 2nd edn., p. 23.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² For a detailed discussion of the doctrines see

Uzoigwe, 'Spheres of Influence', pp. 183-203.

¹³ Hertslet, *Map of Africa*, vol. 1, Articles 6 and 9 of Berlin Act.

¹⁴ Quoted in Uzoigwe, 'Spheres of Influence', p. 187.

or multilateral boundary conferences. In this way the map of Africa was redrawn—and given legal validity.

Nor was the doctrine of the hinterland new in 1884. First enunciated during the English colonization of America, it gained popularity in American historical writing as the principle of contiguity or 'manifest destiny'. The doctrine became useful in Africa after 1885 because most of the European possessions there were at the coast. But the claiming of indefinite areas in the hinterland of coastal possessions caused a lot of friction among the powers and between them and the African sovereigns. Again, like the spheres of influence doctrine of which it was the inevitable extension, the hinterland doctrine was a political rather than a legal notion.¹⁵ The numerous delimitation treaties between the imperialist powers were resorted to because of the frictions which arose from the loose interpretation of this doctrine. In the process the map of Africa was further transformed.

It was one thing either to lay claims to a sphere of influence or to appeal to the hinterland principle; it was another to demonstrate an effective presence there. The demonstration of such a presence was demanded by Article 35 of the Act. This was the dangerous doctrine of 'effective occupation' which killed for good Britain's 'Monroe Doctrine for Africa'. In order to satisfy this provision, the imperialist powers undertook the military subjugation of the continent. The determined efforts by most of the African sovereigns to prevent the forcible occupation of their lands turned the partition of Africa into a most bloody business. The map of Africa that thus evolved after over two decades of systematic boundary making and military occupation was quite different from what it was in the pre-1885 epoch.

Post-Berlin Africa was partitioned into some forty more or less viable political units. I have, indeed, argued elsewhere,¹⁶ to the utter consternation of some, that the map of Africa after partition made more practical sense than it did, for example, in 1879; that only about 30 per cent of the total length and breadth of Africa was, after Berlin, arbitrary, artificial, precipitate, and haphazard; and that thanks to the new advances in cartography, the map-makers did a remarkable job. But I also pointed out that because the imposed boundaries cut across ethnic and linguistic lines and thus messed up the natural, pre-European order, they have become a source of serious boundary disputes and battles which are threatening African peace and stability. These have incalculable consequences as we shall see.

2. PAN-AFRICANISM, ETHNICITY, AND NATIONALISM

After the Europeans had carved up a continent of over eleven million square miles in under a generation—a remarkable feat by any standards—they proceeded to establish functional colonial administration. In the process they came face to face with the second result of the Berlin Act, namely, the competing forces of Pan-Africanism, ethnicity, and nationalism.

¹⁵ M. P. Lindley, *The Acquisition and Government of Backward Territory in International Law*, London 1926, pp. 234–5.

¹⁶ G. N. Uzoigwe, 'The Partition, Conquest and

Occupation of Africa, 1880–1914', in *The Unesco History of Africa*, 8 vols., London 1981–, vol. 7, ed. by A. A. Boahen: *Africa under Colonial Domination, 1880–1935*, London 1985, pp. 19–44.

The Pan-African idea, as a modern notion,¹⁷ is a major result of the Berlin Conference. This is not always realized. There is no suggestion, of course, that the concept of Africa as a geographical entity was the creation of late nineteenth-century European imperialism. What the Berlin Conference and the consequent furious scrambling for African lands and souls did was to persuade a few perceptive black intellectuals and revolutionaries of the African diaspora to come together and ponder about the future of the black race. In other words, they interpreted the purposive historical movement of the second half of the nineteenth century in both Africa and the Americas as heading towards the extinction of the black race. The Berlin West Africa Conference and the Berlin Act simply confirmed their worst fears. Such fears led to the summoning of the first Pan-African Conference in London in 1900. The organizer of the conference was Sylvester Williams, a London-Based West Indian lawyer. This conference marks not only the beginning of the modern history of Pan-Africanism as Imanuel Geiss correctly points out,¹⁸ but it also marks the beginning of the modern history of African Liberation.¹⁹

After World War I, the Pan-African idea became a popular ideology among black intellectuals and revolutionaries all over the world. The conference idea soon evolved into a series of Pan-African Congresses that met periodically in response to international developments that impacted on the future of the black race. Between 1919 and 1974 a total of six Pan-African congresses were held in response to international situations. Their achievements and shortcomings have been competently analysed in several studies.²⁰ Sandwiched between these congresses were the First Conference of Independent African States held in Accra, Ghana, in April 1958; the First All-Africa People's Conference also held in Accra in December 1958; and the Heads of African States and Governments Conference held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in May 1963, at which the Organization of African Unity (OAU) was born.

The goal of these congresses and conferences was, and still is, in large part, to undo what was done in Berlin. Although some successes have been achieved in this endeavour, many other difficulties have been encountered. For example, the modern concept of Pan-Africanism inevitably led to the debate as to what was Africa and who was an African. The debate, one would have thought, was put to rest with the ratification of the OAU charter. Unfortunately, the Western countries in particular are not satisfied. They are seriously determined, on spurious historical arguments, to have

¹⁷ For the beginning of Proto-Pan-Africanism see I. Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement: A History of Pan-Africanism in America, Europe, and Africa*, New York 1974, esp. ch. 3.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ G. N. Uzoigwe, 'Pan-Africanism and International Affairs'. Proceedings of the Workshop on 'A Hundred Years After the Berlin Conference: Perspectives on Africa's Liberation', 12-14 Oct. 1984, Mawazo, Uganda.

²⁰ See, for example, C. Logun, *Pan-Africanism: A Short Historical Guide*, London 1962; American Society of African Culture (ed.), *Pan-Africanism Reconsidered*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1962; G. A. Shepperson, 'The African Abroad or the African Diaspora', in T. O. Ranger (ed.), *Emerging Themes of African History*, Nairobi 1968, pp. 152-76. I. Geiss, 'Pan-Africanism', in *Journal*

of Contemporary History, 4 (1969), pp. 187-200; id., *The Pan-African Movement*; B. O. Esedebe, 'Origins and Meanings of Pan-Africanism', in *Présence africaine*, 73 (1970), pp. 109-217; J. Ayodele Langlely, *Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa 1900-1945: A Study of Ideology and Social Classes*, London 1973; id. (ed.), *Ideologies of Liberation in Black Africa 1856-1970: Documents on Modern African Political Thought from Colonial Times to the Present*, London 1979; V. B. Thompson, *Africa and Unity: The Evolution of Pan-Africanism*, London 1969; A. A. Mazrui, *Towards a Pax Africana: A Study of Ideology and Ambition*, London 1967, especially chs. 3, 6, 9-12. H. Campbell, *Pan-Africanism: The Struggle Against Imperialism and Neo-Colonialism: Documents of the Sixth Pan-African Congress*, Toronto 1975.

two Africas—'Sub-Saharan Africa' and 'Trans-Saharan Africa'—a notion that many well-informed African nationalists totally reject as another Berlin by proxy. It is perhaps worth pointing out that no one has bothered to partition Europe into Sub-Alpine Europe and Trans-Alpine Europe. There are strong historical reasons for justifying such a partition. What infuriates Africans is their perception of the desire of the West always to sow seeds of discord in Africa and the readiness of unsuspecting Africans always to fall for the bait.²¹

Divide et impera was an accepted canon of European administrations in post-Berlin Africa. It could not have been otherwise. In the process of carving up Africa to prevent war among themselves, the imperialist powers found it necessary to lump together into their future colonies or protectorates various nationalities who spoke different languages, practised different cultures, and observed different religious practices. It was their proclaimed policy to weld all these into modern African nations. But realizing that the defeated and undefeated African states were determined to recover their independence, they adopted the well-known colonial tactic of 'divide and rule' as one of the means of ensuring the survival of colonialism. By so doing, they destroyed their original intention by introducing into the African body politic a cancer called ethnicity or 'tribalism' as they preferred to call it. Under colonial management this cancer was carefully nurtured but was never permitted to destroy the bodypolitic. With the dismantling of the colonial superstructure and the recovery of independence, this cancer became more potent and has been threatening for almost a generation to destroy the new nations of Africa.

The major antidote to this cancer has always been and will continue to be post-Berlin African nationalism. This started as the nationalism of the colonial multi-nation states whose major aim was the dismantling of colonialism. It achieved its great feat by fighting a two-pronged battle—against ethnic distinctiveness (subtly or sometimes openly encouraged by the colonial powers) and against the colonial powers themselves. What the leaders of independent African states inherited were, for the most part, deeply divided estates, some of whose leadership came under the thumb of the subterranean forces of international neocolonialism. Post-colonial nationalism, like European colonialism, claims to be engaged in the process of nation-building. The implication of this claim is, of course, that independent African states are not proper nations. But unfortunately, some of our avowed nationalist leaders were and still are unadulterated ethnic chauvinists at heart who manipulate the nationalist slogan to suit their political ends. Ironically, therefore, by employing the tactic of 'divide and rule', these leaders do not differ significantly from the colonial administrators. And yet just as African nationalism triumphed over the colonialists, it will hopefully triumph over ethnic chauvinism and neocolonialism. If it does so, it will have preserved what, in my view, is the major positive result of the Berlin Act—the creation of mostly viable, large states that will sustain Africa in the centuries ahead. Before the Berlin Act, Africa was a geographical expression; after the partition and conquest it became a political reality.

²¹ G. N. Uzoigwe, 'Pan-Africanism and International Affairs'.

3. CHRISTIANITY AND WESTERN EDUCATION

It is not always realized that Christianity is as indigenous to the African continent as it is to the European continent and that its history in Africa is longer than that of many of the surviving religions there. Nor is it always realized that Africa received Western education²² before it received Christianity. But the growth of Christianity and Western education in Africa has by no means been easy. Both experienced many challenges and setbacks. Indeed, as the eighteenth century drew to a close, it was an open question whether Christianity and Western education would survive in Africa in any meaningful sense. Historical developments in Africa in the last quarter of the nineteenth century rescued both from certain extinction. And the major historical movement in this period was the establishment of formal European rule, a direct result of the Berlin West Africa Conference.

With the establishment of colonial rule, Christianity and Western education developed into a major social revolution that has changed the lives of the people. There is hardly today any Western-educated African (who is not a Muslim) who does not acknowledge, however grudgingly, the fundamental impact of Christianity and Western education on his personal development. It can, of course, be argued that this impact is essentially negative. Such an argument is based on a conviction that the two forces arrested and distorted the natural progress of African historical development. Because Africans were induced to accept Christianity and to pursue Western education with a passion, they find themselves adopting European ideas, dress, and culture. This means that they have to abandon the value systems that had sustained their societies for centuries. But because they cannot absorb the European norms fully and cannot abandon their norms totally, they find themselves in a morass of spiritual, social, and intellectual confusion. By thus being forced to accept their cultural and intellectual inferiority they not only have, willy-nilly, acquiesced in the conquest of their minds—the essence of cultural imperialism—but also lend credence to the race theories that guided the proceedings of the delegates at the Berlin Conference. Moreover, the behaviour of many European missionaries and officials in Africa were characterized by hypocrisy, arrogance, paternalism, and even by unchristian cruelty. The Europeans saw the Church as the handmaiden of imperialism and colonialism and the Western clergy saw Christianity essentially through a European filter. But these criticisms of the European clergy and colonial administrators notwithstanding, we must never fail to admit the selfless devotion to duty of many of them, even if, in our view, the European conviction of their mission in Africa was wrongly formulated.

There are, of course, many positive aspects of the European mission in Africa. One can easily point out the many advantages of Western education, science, technology, and so forth, but can also argue that without formal colonization Africa would have had to deal with the impact of Western values and paradigms just as Japan has done with positive and negative results. In reality, formal European colonization of Africa was unnecessary. A few far-sighted Europeans of the nineteenth century expressed a similar view, but for different reasons. In an age of bumptious confidence and belief in

²² Id. 'The Role of Western Education in the Christianization of Africa', Proceedings of the Workshop on Christianity in Africa held at Geneva, Switzerland, 20-2 Sept. 1984.

European omniscience, their shrill voices were not given a hearing. In Britain, for example, the masses of the 'naughty nineties' which, in the words of the late David Thomson, 'made a convention of unconventionality' exhibited such 'an outburst of rancorous patriotism and a cult of brutal impatience with all resistance to British rule overseas'²³ that it made constructive criticism of imperialism impossible in a developing democracy.

Although, then, Berlin and its aftermath facilitated the spread of Christianity and Western education, the manner of their introduction and the goals they were supposed to attain have now brought a negative reaction in the minds of many Africans. For example, the growth of African independent Churches, which started as a trickle, has now turned into a flood. The independent churches are not rejecting Christianity: they are rejecting the European accoutrement of it. Even the traditional Christian denominations are making serious efforts to Africanize their Churches without challenging the basic doctrines of Christianity. Even so, Africa today, unlike Europe today, is not essentially a Christian continent. I am simply suggesting that Europeans, in their enthusiasm to spread the faith, forgot that Christianity was not synonymous with Europeanism and that the Christianity they reintroduced to Africa had earlier been Europeanized to make it acceptable to the European masses. For the early missionaries, therefore, to believe that their version of Christianity would be accepted by Africans without serious alterations was a great error of judgement.

Similar criticisms can be made of the history of Western education in Africa. There is no space to go into details here. But suffice it to say that those of us who are entrusted with the onerous responsibilities of running African educational institutions both as teachers and administrators are facing mounting criticisms from African governments and the African masses. Most of us are accused of being more European than African and are challenged to make education relevant to Africans. We are doing our best to make changes, but it has not been easy. I have always felt that the criticisms of the African educators at the post-primary school level is unfair. Our post-primary school institutions, especially at the university level, have an unhealthy number of foreigners in key positions whose points of view cannot be ignored. It is also worth pointing out that many African governments still prefer Western consultants in educational matters to their African counterparts. Clearly, African governments and the African masses cannot have their cake and eat it.

4. ECONOMIC DEPENDENCE

'Nothing so well demonstrates the element of unreality in the scramble for Africa as the thirty-five years of almost total obscurity which followed the limelight of partition . . . The colonial powers had partitioned Africa as an insurance for the future, not because they had any present plans for its exploitation.'²⁴ So wrote Roland Oliver and John D. Fage over twenty years ago. I have, frankly, not been able to understand the historical evidence on which such a firm conclusion was based. There was nothing unreal about the scramble for Africa. It would have been unreal if Africa had remained in the

²³ D. Thompson, *England in the Nineteenth Century, 1815-1914*, London 1964, p. 188.

²⁴ R. Oliver and J. D. Fage, *A Short History of Africa*, Harmondsworth 1975, p. 199.

limelight after the partition and conquest. There were many other global problems that required European attention. After the partition on the ground, Africa was no longer a major diplomatic issue. The colonial powers set out quietly to make their new possessions pay their way.

I said earlier that the Berlin West Africa Conference was essentially a European economic summit conference. Bismarck underscored the economic dimension of the Conference when he emphasized in his opening remarks that the delegates were summoned

. . . to regulate the conditions most favourable to the development of trade and civilization in certain regions of Africa, to assure to all nations the advantages of free navigation on the two chief rivers of Africa flowing into the Atlantic Ocean [the Congo and the Niger] . . . to obviate the misunderstanding and disputes which might in future arise from the new acts of occupation ('prises de possession') on the coast of Africa . . .²⁵

Leopold II of the Belgians wasted no time in exploiting his new, vast possession in Central Africa.²⁶ And yet Oliver and Fage asserted boldly that the Europeans had no 'present plans for its [Africa's] exploitation'.²⁷ Britain chartered three great companies between 1886 and 1889 for the exploitation of its possessions. Portugal made no bones about making Angola and Mozambique yield enough revenue to help revive its depressed economy. France soon subordinated its much trumpeted 'civilizing mission' to the capitalism of the concessionaire companies. And Germany also floated concessionaire companies which exercised strict monopolies over its possessions.

The net result of these economic initiatives was that Africa became formally integrated into the European capitalist system. I say formally because since the slave trade era Africa had been peripherally part of the European economic system. But by World War II, Africa was completely brought into the capitalist system of the West. In other words, it became an economic dependency of the West. Such a transformation distorted African patterns of production. The exploitative nature of the colonial economy inevitably led to economic underdevelopment. One can, of course, enumerate a myriad of colonial economic initiatives in Africa and argue that these initiatives led to economic improvement. But because colonial economic policies were outward-directed instead of inward-directed, it is difficult to make any meaningful case for economic development in the colonies. A dependent economy exists mainly for the interest of the metropolitan country. The delegates at Berlin were hard-nosed capitalists. So were the directors of the companies formed to exploit Africa's resources. And both would agree with Sir Francis Drake's unabashed statement: 'Their gain shall be the knowledge of our faith. And ours such riches as the[ir] country hath';²⁸ and with Lord Lugard's defence against the accusation of economic greed levelled at the Europeans: 'It is a cheap form of rhetoric which stigmatizes as "common greed" the honourable work by which men and nations earn their bread and improve their standard of life.'²⁹ But an African saying sums up the African point of view:

When they [the Europeans] first came
They had the bible, we had the land.
We now have the bible and they have our land.³⁰

²⁵ Hertslet, *Map of Africa*, vol. 1, pp. 20-47.

²⁶ See Emerson, *Leopold II*, for a detailed account of the king's commercial enterprises in Africa.

²⁷ Oliver and Fage, *Short History of Africa*, p. 199.

²⁸ Quoted in N. Chinweizu, *The West and the Rest of Us: White Predators, Black Slavers and the African Elite*, New York 1975, p. i.

²⁹ Quoted *ibid.*, p. 25.

5. BOUNDARY DISPUTES AND SECESSIONIST MOVEMENTS

The last results of the Berlin West African Conference that I propose to discuss are the endemic boundary disputes and secessionist movements. These, I pointed out earlier, are the legacy of the colonial boundaries imposed at Berlin and the delimitation agreements that characterized the generation following 1885. These problems were papered over during the colonial period. Since the recovery of independence, boundary questions have been threatening to destabilize the African continent. By affirming the sanctity of the colonial boundaries, wisely in my opinion, the OAU intended to avoid the balkanization of Africa, inevitable if it had left the option open for redrawing the colonial boundaries. It also hoped to prevent the inevitable secessionist movements. But since the OAU cannot use force to implement its decisions, its only option is to use diplomatic negotiations to settle problems of this nature. Whatever its weaknesses, it is to its credit that no African boundaries have so far been forcibly redrawn and no forcible and unilateral secessions from the post-Berlin state structures have been allowed to succeed.

And yet the question must be asked: as the problem of Africa's international boundaries has become an emotional issue since the recovery of independence, should the OAU not review the decision of 1963 in the interest of continental peace? My position is that in genuine cases, boundary adjustments ought to be made. Such adjustments should be the responsibility of an independent boundary commission set up by the OAU. After all, a similar policy was adopted by the imperialist powers during the partition processes of the post-1885 epoch. With respect to secessionist movements, the question must also be asked: should the OAU adhere unalterably to its decision of 1963 even in the face of clear evidence of the violation of human rights or proven incompatibility? My position here, too, is that since the OAU exists for Africa and not Africa for the OAU, such cases must be left to an independent judicial commission to be set up by the OAU. The decisions of both the boundary commission and the judicial commission must be made mandatory to all member states of the organization.

CONCLUSION

The post-1885 history of Africa is, broadly speaking, a legacy of the Berlin West Africa Conference. I chose to write on the results of this historic Conference because in spite of the enormous interest generated by the partition of Africa since J. Scott Keltie published his *The Partition of Africa* in 1893,³¹ no one had attempted to assess the results of the Conference. I hope that the above attempt may generate some interest in the subject.

³⁰ Quoted *ibid.*, p. 1.

³¹ J. S. Keltie, *The Partition of Africa*, London 1893.

Index of Persons

- Abadie, Resident 499
 Abbas, Muhammadu 501
 Abdul Hamid II, sultan of Constantinople v, 154
 Abdullahi of Kano 503
 Abdullahi of Yauri 503
 Abdurrahman, sultan of Sokoto 408, 412, 492-3, 496-7
 Abdurrahman of Daura 503
 Aberdare, Lord 53
 Abubakar, emir of Nupe 494
 Abubakar Atiku, sultan of Sokoto 499, 503
 Achebe, Chinua 510, 518
 Adeleye, Rowland Aderemi 462
 Ahmadou of the Tokolor 407-8
 Ahmadu, emir of Yola 503
 Ajayi, J. F. Ade 441
 Akitoye, King 447
 Akpabio, Udo 514 n.
 Akwa 509
 Alagoa, E. J. 461
 Alexander III, Czar 115, 537
 Alexander VI Borgia, Pope 269
 Alexandre, Valentim 215
 Alexandrowicz, Charles Henry 355, 358 n., 368 n.
 Alis, Harry 236
 Aliyu Babba, emir of Kano 412, 497, 499-501
 Alvensleben, F. J. Freiherr von 144 n.
 Amphill, Lord Odo 4
 Anderson, Sir Percy 109, 206, 209, 211, 213, 302, 318, 328, 335, 340-2
 Ansprenger, Franz ix
 Anstey, Roger 37, 55
 Arthington, Robert 93
 Arthur, Chester A., president of the United States 247, 299-300, 302-4 n.
 Asiegbu, Johnson U. J. 402 n.
 Asiwaju, Anthony J. ix, 503 n.
 Atanda, Joseph Adebowale 444
 Attahiru, Sultan of Sokoto 499-503
 Augouard, Father Prosper-Philippe 95-7, 100, 488
 Ayandeke, Emmanuel Ayankanmi 407 n.

 Baba of Karo 406
 Bade, Klaus J. vii-viii
 Bah, Thierno Mouctar 404
 Bai Bureh of Sierra Leone 402-3, 405, 407-8
 Balesi, Charles J. 409
 Ballad, John 448
 Banning, Emile 232-3
 Bara, Jules 241 n.
 Bargash ben Said, sultan of Zanzibar vii, 76, 80-1, 243, 251, 259, 347 n., 361
 Barlow, Officer 498
 Barron, Edward 88
 Barroso, Father 221
 Barth, Heinrich 492
 Baxter, T. W. 437 n.
 Baynes, Henry 97-9
 Beaconsfield, earl of *see* Disraeli, Benjamin
 Beecroft, John 457
 Beecrabort 418-19
 Bell, Rudolf Manga 509, 517
 Bello, Sir Alahji Ahmadu 504, 512-13
 Belloc, Hillaire 516
 Belmont, Perry 303-4 n.
 Bendikat, Elfi ix
 Bennett, James Gordon 295-6
 Benningsen, Rudolf von 112
 Bentley, Holman 93, 97, 99, 488
 Beslier, Geneviève G. 95
 Bethmann Hollweg, Theobald von 537
 Biangala 483
 Bikoko of Mankanza 481, 484
 Billot, General 244
 Binger, Louis Gustave 315
 Birahira 438
 Bismarck, Herbert Count von 6, 135, 138, 154, 157, 167, 186, 248, 266 n.
 Bismarck, Prince Otto von v-viii, 1, 3-15, 17-18, 21, 23-7, 31-2, 54, 65-6, 76, 106, 108-12, 114, 116-21, 124-6, 128-47, 151-69, 171, 177-8, 180-6, 199, 213-14, 231-2, 241-3, 248-50, 253, 265-9, 271-4, 276, 279-80, 284-6, 291-2, 301-2, 317, 322, 328, 335-7, 340, 344, 347 n., 349-50, 352-3, 355, 378-9, 381, 384-96, 527-9, 531-3, 542, 545, 551
 Blanc, Xavier 174
 Bleichröder, Gerson von 108, 128, 134, 164, 236, 240
 Blyden, Edward Wilmot 275, 290-1, 522-3
 Boahen, Adu 519
 Boitzenburg, Count Arnim von 116
 Bontinck, François 284
 Borgnis-Desbordes, Gustave 172, 185
 Bosworth, Colonel 403
 Bourne, Fox 299 n.
 Braithwaite Wallis, C. 406
 Braudel, Fernand 538-9
 Brazza, Pierre Savorgnan de v, 3, 20 n., 35, 53-4, 57, 94-7, 99, 131, 174-7, 182-3, 185, 204-6, 211, 224, 233, 235, 239, 250, 257, 298-9, 382-3, 395, 472-3, 477-9, 487-8, 529-30, 534
 Brecht, Bertolt 531
 Bright, Jacob 99, 210 n., 237
 Bright, John 99
 Buhari of Sokoto 500
 Buisseret, Auguste 103
 Bula-Matari *see* Stanley, Henry Morton
 Burba Jollof 407
 Burnay, Henrique 220
 Burton, Sir Richard Francis 89
 Busch, Klemens August 182 n., 184 n., 278-9, 362, 374, 542

- Buthelezi, Gatsha 508
 Buuki 418-19

 Cameron, Sir Donald 502
 Cameron, Verney Lovett 89, 93, 194
 Capela, José 218
 Capello, Hermenegildo 218
 Caprivi, Leo Count von 135
 Cardew, Sir J. 403
 Carnarvon, Henry earl of 74, 189, 191, 197-201, 210
 Carnegie, Dale 498, 538
 Carrie, Father H. (R.P.) 94-6 n.
 Carter, Sir Gilbert 408
 Carter, Jimmy 529
 Casement, Sir Roger 310
 Cawston, George 81-2
 Cazémajou, Captain 411
 Chamberlain, Joseph 330, 385
 Chanaiwa, David 443
 Chanoine, Lieutenant 411
 Chaucer, Geoffrey 283
 Clarence-Smith, W. Gervase viii
 Clemenceau, Georges 137, 391
 Cleveland, Grover, president of the United States
 282 n., 303-4 n.
 Clifford, Sir Hugh 502 n.
 Cobden, Richard 62-4
 Colbert, J. B. 493
 Colin, Friedrich 314
 Columbus, Christopher 538-9
 Comber, Thomas 93, 97, 488
 Comboni, Daniel 91-2
 Comillas, marquis of *see* López y López, Antonio
 Coote, J. M. 428-9
 Coquery-Vidrovitch, Cathérine 470
 Coquilhat, Camille 473, 475-6, 479-85, 487-8
 Cordier, Lieutenant Commander 96, 174, 176-7
 Courcel, Alphonse Baron de 4, 6, 14-15, 27, 100,
 155 n., 162-5 n., 177-8, 180-2, 184-7 n., 199, 232,
 241, 248-50, 269, 271, 273-4, 277 n.-278, 342 n.,
 347 n., 349, 351, 355, 359, 371 n., 373, 390
 Courcel, Geoffrey de viii, 527 n.
 Craven, missionary 94
 Crowder, Michael ix, 498, 504
 Crowe, Sir Joseph Archer 184 n., 282
 Crowe, Sybil E. x, 36, 51, 155 n., 263, 282, 286,
 299 n., 301 n., 541-2
 Crowther, Samuel Ajayi 509, 521
 Crudgington, Henry 93
 Crummell, Alexander 288-9
 Cuvelier, Adolphe de 102

 Damel of Kayor 411
 Dan Ya Musa 499
 Danckelmann, Baron Alexander S. F. E. von 383
 Davidson, Basil 532
 Delcommune, Alexander 471
 De Leon, Daniel 244 n., 291-2
 Denoon, Donald 437 n.
 Denzer, La Ray 402
 Derby, Lord Frederick Arthur Stanley 194, 198, 200,
 349, 385, 427, 429, 534

 Dernburg, Bernhard 330
 Déroulède, Paul 529
 Des Forges, Alison 421
 Devaux, Jules 240 n.
 Dias de Carvalho, explorer 218
 Dido 509
 Dike, Kenneth Onwoka 456
 Diko, Muhammad, emir of Katsina 503
 Dilke, Charles 124
 Dior, Lat 409, 411
 Disraeli, Benjamin 4, 153, 202, 377
 Dodds, Alfred A. 409
 Dogho Numa 461
 Dolisie, Albert 96
 Donnelly, Ignatius 283
 Donnersmarck, Count Hugo Henckel von 107
 Dorward, David 504
 Dosumu, Prince 447
 Drake, Sir Francis J. 304, 551
 Dresch, Jean 471
 Du Bois, William Edward Burghardt 289, 291
 Duclerc, Charles 174, 176, 178, 204, 206
 Dufays, P. Felix 422
 Duignan, Peter ix, 327, 330
 Duparquet, Consul 220
 Dyaulé-Karamogho, Prince 514
 Dyes, merchant 128

 Echenberg, Myron J. 404
 Eetvelde, Baron Edmond Van 102
 Elizabeth I, queen of England 350
 Emin Pasha 138, 305, 426
 Enahoro, Anthony 505
 Engelhardt, delegate 184, 364
 Etienne, Eugène 315
 Ewata 483

 Fabri, Friedrich 110, 112 n.-113, 119, 121, 124-5,
 128, 134-6, 138, 140, 143
 Fad-El-Allah 499
 Fadlallah, Rabin ibn 408, 499
 Fage, John D. 550-1
 Faure, Félix 175-6, 185
 Ferry, Jules 3-8, 10-11, 14, 16-18, 21-2, 27, 53, 96-7,
 137, 155, 161-2, 166 n., 176-87, 201, 206, 213, 231,
 235-6, 248-50, 269, 350-2, 355, 358 n., 387, 390-1,
 395-6, 528
 Fika, Adamu 412, 464-5, 503-4
 Fish, Hamilton 286
 Flegel, Robert 36, 459, 493
 Flint, John E. 340 n., 455, 462, 493 n.-494 n.
 Foli, Bonifatius 514 n., 517-19
 Förster, Stig x, 412 n.
 Forster, William Edward 99
 Foulke, C. H. 499 n.
 Franchi, Cardinal 89
 Franck, Louis 330
 François I, king of France 350
 Freeman, Thomas Birch 456-7
 Frelinghuysen, Frederick T. 289, 300-1
 Frere, Sir Henry Bartle 199, 236, 297
 Frère-Orban, Walter 234 n.

- Freycinet, Charles de 172, 186-7 n., 201
 Fugelstad, F. 411 n.

 Gairal, F. 367
 Gaiser, G. L. 62
 Gallagher, John 37, 75, 537
 Gallieni, Joseph 35
 Gama, Vasco da 219, 538-9
 Gambetta, Léon 96 n., 98, 201
 Gann, Lewis H. ix, 330, 344 n.
 Geiß, Imanuel vii-viii, 547
 Gerlach, Hellmut von 517
 Giers, Nikolaus von 107, 115, 266-7
 Gifford, Lord 81-2
 Gladstone, William Ewart 10, 14, 25, 54, 71, 75, 78-9, 137, 160, 167-8, 177, 187, 195, 198-9, 202, 206, 213, 378, 385, 387-9, 528-9
 Glave, Edward James 309-10
 Glele, king of Dahomey 448
 Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von 265
 Goldie, Sir George Taubman 11, 29, 51, 53, 78-80, 276, 277, 328, 335, 338, 340-1, 343-4, 459, 494, 496
 Gollwitzer, Heinz 139
 Gordon, Charles George 10, 19, 527
 Götzen, Adolf Count von 415
 Grant, Ulysses S. 314
 Granville, George Earl 3-5, 8-10, 13-16, 21-3, 27, 99, 154, 158, 160, 167-8, 178-9, 183, 187, 200-1, 205, 212, 236, 243 n., 266 n., 268-9, 324, 335-6, 338, 340-1, 344, 351, 355, 528
 Grawert, von 422
 Greindl, Baron Jules 233
 Grenfell, George 93
 Grévy, Jules, president of France 172
 Grogan, Ewart S. 428 n.
 Grotius, Hugo 254, 527
 Groves, C. P. 85
 Grube, Jochen 378 n.
 Gründer, Horst viii
 Gudovius 435
 Guimarães, Angela 215, 223
 Guinness, Fanny 94
 Guinness, Henry Grattan 94
 Guizot, François 194

 Haase, Hugo 517
 Haggard, Rider 308
 Hamidou Kane, Cheikh 511, 513
 Hammond, Richard 215, 218, 222
 Hansemann, Adolph von 128, 134
 Hanssens, Captain 474-6, 480
 Hargreaves, John D. vi, ix, 263, 279, 407 n., 536 n.
 Harrison, Thomas 51
 Hartland, John 93
 Hartzell, Joseph C. 306
 Hasenclever, F. A. 128, 135-6
 Hatzfeldt, Paul Count von 5, 178, 180, 194-5, 249, 271, 391
 Hay, John 310
 Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich 535
 Hément, journalist 235

 Henry, Emile Joseph-Ghislain 457
 Hesse, Hermann 369
 Hewby, W. P. 494
 Hewett, Edward H. 62, 67, 78, 176, 194, 207, 453
 Hill, Sir Clement 237, 337-8, 340
 Hinsley, Francis Harry 544
 Hobson, John Atkinson 72
 Hohenlohe-Langenburg, Hermann Prince von 113-16, 119 n., 124
 Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, Chlodwig Prince von 113-15, 177
 Holly, Theodore 289
 Holmwood, Frederik 81
 Holt, John 51, 54
 Hopkins, A. G. 37
 Hopkins, Elizabeth ix
 Horton, James Africanus 321, 509, 519
 Hübbe-Schleiden, Wilhelm 113, 121
 Hunkanrin, Louis 448
 Hutton, James F. 51, 53-6, 207-11, 213, 334

 Ibaka of the Bolobo 482, 484
 Ibn Idrissa, Muhammadu, emir of Fika 503
 Ibrahim, emir of Kontagora 499
 Ibsen, Henrik 284, 318
 Igbafe, Philip Aigbona 461
 Ijo of Brass 461
 Ikellé-Matiba, Jean 511
 Ikenge of Wangata 481, 484
 Ikime, Obaro ix, 30, 402, 406, 503 n.
 Iradier, explorer 225
 Ironsi, General 505
 Isaacman, Allen 406, 410 n., 442
 Isaacman, Barbara 406, 410 n.
 Isichei, Elisabeth 413
 Ivens, Roberto 218

 Ja'afaru of Zaria 503, 505
 Ja Ja of Opobo, king of the Niger Delta 29 n., 50-1, 365, 458, 460-1, 463, 466, 515
 Jameson, Leander Starr 72
 Janssen, Camille 102
 Jauréguiberry, Jean 172-4, 176, 201, 206
 John, Priest 381
 Johnson, James 521-2
 Johnson, Samuel 411
 Johnston, Sir Harry 27, 109-10, 325, 460
 Judah, Rabbi 321

 Kanya-Forstner, Alexander Sydney viii, 402
 Kanza 480
 Kapnist, Count 266, 291 n.
 Kasson, John A. 19, 255, 277 n., 281-2, 286-8, 291, 301-3 n., 319, 327, 361-2, 364, 372-3, 542, 545
 Keith, Arthur Berriedale 281, 292
 Keltie, James Scott 24, 536, 552
 Kemball, General 497 n.
 Kerckhorch G. F. Van 480
 Khama III of the Bangwato 408
 Kimberley, John earl of 203, 205, 212
 King, David 493
 Kipling, Rudyard 274, 324

- Kirk, Sir John 54, 207, 240
 Kirk-Greene, Anthony H. M. vii, ix
 Knutsford, Henry Thurstan Holland, 1st Viscount 82
 Köhler, August 519
 Königk, Georg x
 Kosoko 447
 Krause, Gottlob Adolf 515
 Kusserow, Henrich von 112 n., 114-15, 119
 Kwevi, Geli 518
- Laboulaye, de 97, 183
 Lambermont, Baron Auguste 92 n., 232-4, 242, 252
 Lamido of Adamawa 492 n.
 Langer, William L. 36, 153
 Lapsley, Samuel N. 306
 Lardner, F. D. 430-1
 Latrobe, John N. B. 288, 298
 Launay, Count de 100, 236, 352 n., 355, 371 n., 373
 Laveleye, Emile de 237, 247, 322
 Lavigerie, Charles Martial Allemand 89-93, 98, 100, 144, 259, 261
 Lawal, Mohammed, emir of Yola 492
 Laws, Robert 341
 Lécuyer, M. C. 226
 Lenin, Vladimir Ilich 72
 Leo XIII, Pope 91
 Leopold II, King of Belgium v-vi, viii-ix, 3, 6-7, 10, 12, 15-18, 23, 37, 53, 55, 57, 60, 74, 76, 80-1, 88-9, 92-5, 97-9, 102, 116-17, 164-5, 168, 174, 176-7, 182-3, 185, 198, 204, 207, 209 n., 211, 213, 224-5, 229-44, 247-8, 250, 258-9, 261, 268, 273-4, 281-90, 292, 296-302, 306-10, 316-18, 322-3, 328-9, 334-5, 343, 345, 381-2, 392, 394, 415-16, 427, 430, 433, 472-3, 475, 478-9, 485, 522, 531, 551
 Leroy-Beaulieu, Paul 122 n.
 Lesseps, Ferdinand de 239
 Levy-Lawson, Edward 295
 Linchwe I of the Rakgatla-ba-Kgafela 405
 Lincoln, Abraham, president of the United States 301
 Linden, Ian 423
 Lindsay, Vachel 290
 Lingenji 482
 List, Friedrich 276
 Lister, Sir T. Villiers 10, 79, 202-6, 210, 212-13 n., 244, 340
 Livingstone, David 85-6, 89, 211, 223 n., 283, 295, 305, 322-4
 Lobengula of the Matabele (Ndebele) 82, 408
 Lodge, Henry Cabot 310
 Loemba of Loango, André 96
 López y López, Antonio 226
 Loth, Heinrich 321
 Louis I, king of Portugal 471
 Louis, William Roger 302, 378 n., 435
 Louis-Philippe, king of France 194
 Lüderitz, Franz Adolf E. 7, 54, 76, 116, 124-5, 128, 136, 157-8, 248
 Lugard, Lord Frederick 274, 404, 406, 459, 464, 496-8 n., 500-2, 551
 Lyons, Lord Edmund 238
- Macaulay, Herbert 543
 Macdonald, Claude 461, 463
 McGowan, Winston 407-8
 Machiavelli, Niccolò 527
 Mackinnon, Sir William 54-6, 80-1, 207, 237, 240, 296, 334
 McLuhan, Marshall 540
 Mafindi, Muhammadu, emir of Muri 501-3
 Mai Maina of Askira 499 n.
 Mai Wurno 500
 Makoko of Bateke 53, 96-9, 174, 176, 204, 239, 250, 471, 473, 477-80, 534
 Makuentcho 473-6, 479
 Malamine, Sergeant 94, 488
 Malet, Sir Edward 15, 100, 184-6, 236 n., 275, 278, 321, 333 n., 335-6, 338, 340, 351-2 n., 355, 507
 Maltby, Officer 498
 Maltzahn, Hermann Freiherr von 113, 115, 119
 Marafa, Muhammadu, sultan of Sokoto 500
 Marseille, Jaques 227
 Marsh, Major 499
 Martitz, lawyer 363-4
 Marx, Karl 72, 322-4
 Masaba of Nupe 74, 494
 Mason, Philip 442
 Massala 472-3
 Mata-Boike 480-5, 487
 Mata-Ipeko 483
 Mat-Mpopo 482-3
 Mateke, Philemon 418 n., 424
 Matos, José Norton de 330
 Mattei, Antoine 173, 175
 Mbaeyi, P. M. 412 n.
 Meade, Robert 13, 14
 Meier, Hermann H. 115
 Menelik 523
 Mepon 448
 Meyer, Paul-Constantin 40
 Michahelles, Consul 147
 Miers, Susanne ix
 Miller, Alexander 51
 Miller, Walter 499
 Milner, Lord Alfred, 1st Viscount 527
 Miquel, Johannes 111-13, 116, 119 n.
 Mizon, Lieutenant 493
 Mlapa, Ewe King of Togo 315
 Mohun, Richard Dorsey 306-8
 Moloney, Captain 498
 Mommsen, Wolfgang J. vii-viii, x, 445 n., 532
 Momodu, king of Sebe 450
 Mompata 482-3
 Mongonga of Bongwele 480
 Montesquieu, Charles L. de Secondat 539
 Morel, Edmund 310
 Morel, Edward Dene 290
 Morgan, John Tyler 288
 Morgen, Curt 493
 Morier, Sir Robert 198-9, 205, 212-13
 Morland, Colonel 497
 Morton, Levi P. 244 n.
 Morton, R. F. 405

- Moynier, Gustave 117, 247
 Mugabe, Robert 442 n.
 Muhammadu, sultan of Sokoto 503
 Mumbanza mwa Bawele ix
 Mungimbe 480
 Mungolo 482
 Münster, Georg Herbert Count zu 32, 120, 139, 147, 154-5 n., 162, 180, 349
 Murphy, J. B. 308
 Musinga, king of Rwanda 416, 419-20, 422-4, 426, 434-5, 437-9
 Mustafa of Yola 503
 Muvunandinda 418-19

 Nachtigal, Gustav 78, 116, 158-9, 164, 177, 314-17
 Nana of Ebrohimi 29, 460, 463, 466
 Nana Mariam 499
 Nana of Warri 50-1
 Napoleon I, emperor of France 532
 Napoleon III, emperor of France 75, 194-5
 Nasser, Gamal Abd al- 540
 Ndayako, Muhammadu, emir of Bida 496, 502-3
 Ndochibiri 439
 Newbury, Colin W. viii, 26, 340 n., 412 n., 446
 Ngaliema of Kintambo 484, 486 n., 488
 Ngampey 477
 Ngombe 483
 Nindo 434-5
 Nirimbilima 440
 Njoya, sultan of Bamun 515
 Nkomo, Joshua 442 n.
 Nkrumah, Kwame 531
 Norbury, Willoughby 51
 Northbrook, 1st earl of 6, 186 n., 212, 236
 Nya, Muhammadu, emir of Muri, 493-4, 496
 Nyamalembe of Limpanza 483
 Nyindo, prince of Bufumbira 419, 421, 424-6, 428, 431, 434-9
 Nzemeke, Alexander D. viii, 514 n.-515

 Obichere, Boniface 441
 O'Brien, Donal Cruise 409
 Oliver, Roland 550-1
 Oloruntimehin, B. Olatunji 441
 Omari 476
 Osuntokun, Jide 466
 O'Swald, William 62
 Owsley, Harriet 284

 Palmer, Robert R. 532
 Palmerston, Lord Henry 11, 193, 210
 Parabo 458
 Park, Mungo 385
 Pauncefote, Sir Julian 336
 Pechuel-Loesche, Eduard 233 n., 382
 Peel, John David Yeadon 444
 Penfentenyo, A. de 96 n.
 Pepple, George, king of Bonny 457-8
 Perham, Margery 498 n.
 Péroz, Etienne 513
 Person, Yves 512-14

 Peters, Karl 80, 124-5, 145
 Philbin, Eugene A. 310
 Phillips, Consul-General 406, 461
 Pirio, Greg 215
 Planque, Father Auguste 91-2
 Plato 542
 Pogge, Paul 36
 Pogge von Strandmann, Hartmut vii-viii
 Poincaré, Raymond 537
 Pratt, Julius W. 288
 Puttkamer, Jesko von 518

 Quérial, Officer 96 n.

 Raindre, V. 184 n.
 Ranger, Terence Osborn 441-2, 450, 507-8, 517
 Raschdau, Ludwig 143
 Ratcliffe, Barrie M. 37
 Ratzel, Friedrich 112
 Rhodes, Cecil 71-2, 81-2, 322, 328, 408
 Robinson, Charles Henry 495 n.
 Robinson, Ronald E. vii-viii, x, 37, 75, 441, 537
 Rodney, Walter 280, 330
 Rohlf, Gerhard F. 144, 322
 Roosevelt, Theodore, president of the United States 310
 Rosebery, Lord Archibald Philip Primrose 365
 Rothschild, Lord Lionel 81
 Rouvier, Maurice 96 n., 171, 174, 201, 204
 Rüger, Adolf 517
 Russell, Lord John 9
 Rwabugiri, King 418-20, 422, 426

 Said Pasha 100
 Salisbury, Lord Robert Cecil, 3rd marquis of 26-7, 71, 79-81, 137, 187, 189, 198-200, 212, 343, 537
 Sall, Demba War 409
 Samori Turé, Imam 403, 405, 407-8, 411, 509, 512-14, 522 n.-523
 Samudu, Iman Ahmadu *see* Samori Turé, Imam
 Sanderson, G. Neville viii
 Sanford, Henry Shelton 233, 256, 281-2, 284-8, 291, 296-9, 301-2, 305-6
 Sanusi, Muhammadu, emir of Kano 503, 505
 Sardauna of Sokoto 504
 Schäfer, Dietrich 532
 Scheut 91-2
 Schieder, Theodor 153
 Schmidt, Eduard 516
 Schmidt, Helmut 529
 Seeley, Sir John 122 n.
 Seixas, António José de 224
 Selbourne, William Waldegrave Palmer, 2nd earl of 9
 Senghor, Léopold Sédar 519
 Serpa Pimentel, António de 277 n., 374
 Serpa Pinto, explorer 218
 Serrano, C. 226
 Shehu of Sokoto 501, 504
 Sheppard, William Henry 289-90, 306, 308
 Shepperson, George ix

- Shepstone, Sir Theophilus 199
 Shufeldt, Robert W. 300, 303-5
 Sidmouth, Lord 350
 Silva Porto, explorer 218, 223 n.
 Simcon Bar Yohai, Rabbi 321
 Simiand 538
 Singer, Joel David 536
 Sjöblom, E. V. 308
 Smaldone, Joseph P. 404
 Small, Melvin 536
 Smith, Adam 70
 Smith, Mary 406
 Smith, M. G. 504
 Smith, Robert 407
 Sohingbe, Prince 448
 Soji, king of Porto Novo 448
 Solomon, King 329
 Solvyns, Henry Baron 98, 233
 Speke, John Hanning 89
 Stanley, Henry Morton 19 n., 22, 55, 86-9, 93, 95,
 97-8, 100, 107, 131, 176, 183, 194, 204, 211, 229,
 233-4, 238-40, 256-7, 275, 281-4, 286-8, 290-2,
 295-302, 305, 308-9, 327, 341, 381-3, 392, 426,
 469, 472-5, 482, 484, 486, 488
 Stengers, Jean viii, 18, 532
 Stevens, Arthur 233
 Strauch, Maximilien Charles 98, 233-5
 Ström, missionary 94
 Suliman, emir of Ilorin 494, 496
 Suret-Canale, Jean 471

 Taunt, Emory H. 305
 Taylor, Alan John Percivale 155 n.
 Taylor, Bishop William 306
 Tewfik Bey, Pasha 100, 154, 330
 Thièrs, Louis Adolphe 194
 Thomas, Harold Beken 427
 Thomson, David 550
 Thomson, Joseph 492-4
 Thomson, William M. 304
 Tipu Tib 27, 308-9, 325
 Tisdale, W. P. 302
 Tofa, king of Porto Novo 315, 319, 448
 Tournier, Captain 513
 Treitschke, Heinrich von 106 n., 139
 Tritton, Joseph 99
 Twain, Mark 282
 Twiss, Sir Travers 337, 355
 Tyrwhitt, traveller 492

 Uchtritz, von 493
 Umar Suleiman of Bedde 503

 Urabi, Ahmad 25
 Urwamavuta 425
 Usman dan Fodio 267, 499, 501, 504
 Usman Nagogo of Katsina 501-3, 505
 Uzoigwe, G. N. x

 Vandervelde, Emile 485
 Vangele 483, 485
 Vellut, Jean-Luc 223 n.
 Verdier, A. 315
 Verminck, C. A. 173
 Victoria, Queen 1 n., 82, 158, 202 n., 235 n., 402 n.,
 529
 Viktoria, Crown Princess 1 n.
 Voss, Johannes 516
 Voulet, Captain 411

 Wack, Henry Wellington 310
 Waddington, William Henry 178-9, 187
 Wakefield, Gibbon 71
 Walewski, Count Alexandre Florian Joseph C. 195
 Walker, Admiral 522 n.
 Wallace 494, 498
 Wallace, Edgar 310
 Wallerstein, Immanuel 280
 Washausen, Helmut 37
 Waziri Ahmadu 497
 Weber, Ernst von 121-2
 Wehler, Hans-Ulrich 137-8, 156
 Wesseling, Henk L. vii, x, 403
 Westermann, Diedrich 517
 Westlake, John 362, 543
 Wilberforce, William 11
 Wilhelm, Crown Prince (from 1888 Wilhelm II,
 German emperor) 113, 115, 330
 Wilhelm I, German emperor 9, 110, 137, 272, 511, 537
 Williams, George Washington 289-90, 309
 Williams, Sylvester 547
 Wilson, Woodrow, president of the United States 527
 Wintgens 420
 Wissmann, Hermann 36
 Woermann, Adolph 110, 127, 129-33, 140, 142-3,
 145, 147, 382
 Wolf, E. 138
 Wright, Captain 497
 Wylde, William Henry 213, 335

 Yahaya of Gwandu 493, 495, 501, 503

 Zagury, Isaac 51
 Zintgraff, Eugen 493
 Zubeiru, emir of Yola 493-4, 496, 498, 500-3

Index of Places

- Abeokuta 28, 443, 445-6, 449-50, 455, 491 n.
 Abomey *see* Agbome
 Abuja 497
 Abyssinia 75 n., 381, 523
 Accra 547
 Adamawa 36, 40, 173, 500 n.-501
 Addis Ababa 547
 Adjido 518
 Ado-Odo 449
 Afghanistan 267, 388, 527
 Aflao 315
 Agbome 445, 448-50, 521
 Aghwey 315
 Aja region, 446, 449-51
 Akan 315
 Akassa 52, 461
 Alabama 306
 Alaska 309
 Albert Lake 75 n., 91, 426, 432
 Albreda 314
 Alexandria 6, 162
 Algeria 26, 63-4, 73, 113, 171-2, 175, 539
 Algiers 89
 Alima 97 n., 477
 Alsace 152, 181
 Alsace-Lorraine 248, 356, 377, 387, 390, 395, 529, 531
 Amazonia 354
 Ambas Bay 316
 Ambriz 44, 51, 54, 88, 193-5, 220, 380
 Ambrizette 51
 Amsterdam 304
 Angola 54 n., 88, 219-24, 316, 345 n., 380, 551
 Angra Pequena v-vi, 3, 6-7, 9, 13-14, 26, 53, 76, 106, 116, 124, 128, 131, 133, 153, 157-60, 213, 248, 270, 349-50, 355
 Anniston 306
 Annobón 224
 Antwerp 208
 Argentina 372 n.
 Arguin 314
 Aro 454
 Asaba 68, 464-5
 Asante *see* Ashanti
 Ashanti kingdom 315, 519, 521
 Askira 499
 Assinie 315
 Australia 9, 26, 71, 354
 Austria *see* Austria-Hungary
 Austria-Hungary 1, 4, 32, 73, 111, 120, 155, 165, 169, 186, 286, 296, 347, 378, 390, 533
 Awori kingdom 449
 Azores 219
 Badagry 448
 Bafulabé 172, 175
 Balenge 306
 Balkans, the 24, 73, 151, 155, 169, 378, 531, 535, 544
 Bamako 36, 172-3, 175, 185, 401, 513
 Bambuk 35
 Bamun 515
 Banana 51, 304
 Bangala 480
 Banza Kulu district 472
 Banza Manteke 94
 Barmen 121
 Batanga 515
 Bathurst *see* Gambia
 Bauchi 497, 501
 Bechuanaland 14, 54, 72, 82, 158 n.-159, 406 n.
 Bedde 503
 Belgium v-vii, 5, 41, 102, 229-30, 232-3, 247, 251, 256, 270, 284, 291, 296, 298, 301, 323, 328-30, 342, 416, 422-3, 426, 432-3, 436
 Bemba 94
 Benadir coast 213 n.
 Benhazin 445, 448
 Benin, river and region 29, 40 n., 190, 316, 406, 410, 442, 445, 450, 454, 457, 460-1, 463, 521
 Benue River 29, 36, 173-4, 260, 459, 493-5
 Berlin v-x, 1 n.-12, 14-17, 19-27, 30-2, 55, 59, 62-8, 77-80, 83, 85, 99-101, 105-7, 115-18, 120, 124-8, 131, 135, 141-3, 146, 151, 153, 162, 171, 181-3, 185, 187, 195, 197, 201, 214, 223-6, 230, 232-4, 236 n., 241-2, 247-51, 253-61, 263-4, 266-9, 271, 275-92, 295, 297 n., 299 n., 301-4, 306, 313-15, 317-22, 325, 329-31, 334-5, 337-40, 342-5, 347-9, 353-6, 358-61, 363-4, 366-7, 369-72, 374-5, 377-8, 387, 393, 395, 397, 401, 407, 412 n.-413, 415-16, 444-5 n., 447, 451, 453-4, 466, 469, 479, 486-7, 489, 492, 494 n., 503 n., 507, 513, 515, 527-33, 541-52
 Beti River 498
 Bida 491, 494, 496, 499-500, 502
 Bima hill 499
 Birmingham 327, 379
 Birnin Konni 411 n.
 Bisandugu 513
 Bobeka 479
 Bobi 457
 Bolenge 483
 Bolobo 479-80, 482, 484, 486
 Bolokowansamba 480, 483
 Boma 51, 57, 88, 94, 96 n., 310, 470, 472
 Bombay 80
 Bombele 483
 Bonny 29, 40 n., 51, 455-6, 458, 463
 Bopoto 479
 Borgu 408, 504
 Borneo 50, 78, 173, 225, 230
 Boroukwamba *see* Bolokowansamba
 Bosphorus 151

- Boston 282, 291
 Botswana 405
 Bradford 379
 Brass, river and region 29, 40 n., 44, 57, 68, 176, 454, 460-1
 Brazil 70, 217, 222, 334
 Brazzaville 94-6, 176, 185, 276, 316
 Bremen 115, 128, 131, 143, 157-8
 Bristol 61, 379
 British Columbia 26
 British East Africa 259, 439
 British Empire 70, 105, 151, 160, 265, 388, 534
 British India 200
 British Rwanda *see* British East Africa
 British West Africa 37, 41, 191, 208 n., 339
 Brussels 3, 67, 89, 92, 143-5, 233, 243, 259, 261, 285, 288, 291, 296-7, 306, 328-9, 343-5, 369, 429, 432, 472
 Bufumbira 415, 417-19, 424-40
 Buganda 81, 91
 Bujumbura *see* Usumbura
 Bulama, island of 314
 Bulera, Lake 423
 Bulgaria 267
 Burmi 499-501
 Bussa 173-4

 Cabinda 96, 183 n., 234, 316
 Cairo 4, 6, 14, 25, 75
 Calabar 29, 40 n., 44, 190, 455, 457-8
 Cambridge 288
 Cameroon 3, 6, 13-14, 36, 40, 44, 51, 57, 66, 76, 78, 93, 105, 116, 125, 130-1, 133 n.-134, 142-6, 159, 164, 166, 180 n., 203, 225, 270, 316, 401 n., 509, 511, 515-17, 522, 534
 Canada vii, 71, 113
 Cape Colony v, 13-14, 49, 54, 70-1, 73, 75, 82, 128, 153, 158-9, 189, 270, 339, 349
 Cape Delgado 251
 Cape of Good Hope 297, 401 n., 539
 Cape Mount 315
 Cape Town 75 n., 349
 Cape Verde 219, 401 n.
 Cardiff 94
 Caribbean, the 70
 Castile 226
 Catalonia 226
 Central Africa vii, 6, 16-19, 21-7, 31, 40, 85-6, 88 n.-91, 93, 98, 106 n., 108, 117, 121, 171-2, 181, 186, 195, 199, 213-14, 218, 220, 222-6, 229-30, 236-41, 243, 247-8 n., 251-2, 256, 258-9, 261, 263, 274, 280, 282, 285, 287-8, 292, 296, 302, 306, 322-3, 325-6, 328, 335, 341, 393, 395, 401, 406, 439, 469, 471, 479, 486, 551
 Central African Republic 276
 Central Asia 137
 Ceylon 38, 44, 70, 73
 Chad 35, 173
 Chad, Lake 173, 341-2, 492, 499
 Chahifi 439
 Chamba 491
 Chavannes 97 n.

 Chibbuk 491
 China 1, 8, 10, 210 n., 231, 265, 267, 320, 382, 390, 528, 535-6
 Chio Islands 230
 Cologne 283, 292
 Conakry 314
 Congo Free State 44, 102, 165 n., 182, 185, 239, 250 n., 258-9, 261, 263, 268, 274, 276-7, 281-3, 285, 288-90, 292, 298, 300, 302, 305-10, 316-17, 322, 325-6, 328, 345, 373, 392-3, 395, 415, 417, 423, 432, 471, 487, 528, 530-2, 536, 543
 Congo River v, viii, 1, 11, 15, 17, 51, 55, 59, 66, 77, 95, 131, 165, 174, 205, 241, 247, 249-50, 252-3, 260-1, 263, 268, 280, 296, 299, 304-5, 317, 326, 335, 339, 342, 372, 380-2, 385, 389, 415, 472-3, 477, 482, 487-8, 531, 541, 551
 Corisco, island of 316
 Cotonou 316, 445, 448
 Creek Town 455, 457-8
 Cross River 57
 Cross River State 514 n.
 Cuba 217, 224-6
 Cyprus 153, 267

 Dahomey ix, 197, 316, 410, 441-6, 448-50, 496, 522
 Dakar 26, 172, 411
 Danube 1, 247, 249, 252-3, 276, 292, 372
 Dardanelles, the 267
 Daura 503
 Davou 315
 Delagoa Bay 13, 26, 53, 55
 Dembia 314
 Demsa 459
 Denmark 347
 Denu 315
 Dikwa 499
 Douro River 220
 Duala 57, 509, 511
 Düsseldorf 124, 128
 Duke Town 455, 457-8
 Dutch Empire 70
 Dutch Indies *see* Netherlands Indies
 Dutch Republic *see* Netherlands

 East Africa v, 9, 13-14, 22-3, 25, 53, 57, 74-6, 79-81, 85-6, 89, 91, 93, 109, 118, 120, 122, 126, 138, 144-6, 189-90, 194, 197-8, 200 n., 214, 225, 285, 287, 296, 300, 304, 324, 326, 339, 344, 401, 415, 432, 449, 507
 East Asia 5, 163, 269, 272, 384, 534
 East Elbia 129, 142
 Edward, Lake 415-16, 418, 426
 Egbaland 466
 Egga 459
 Egypt v-vi, 3-6, 9-10, 13-14, 23, 25, 31-2, 38, 49-50, 74-6, 117, 134, 137, 139, 151-2, 154-5, 161-2, 167, 169, 177, 179-81, 186-7, 189-90, 198, 202 n., 204, 213 n., 248, 265 n., 267, 329, 335, 387, 390, 396, 529, 534
 Ekiti 28
 Elbe, River 292, 372
 Eloby 131, 316

- England *see* Great Britain
 English Oriental Africa *see* British East Africa
 Engumba 481
 Entebbe 434
 Equatorial Africa *see* Central Africa
 Erfut 396
 Ethiopia 74-5 n., 276, 321, 523, 547
 Eweland 315

 Fashoda 353, 496
 Federal Republic of Germany vii
 Fernando Po 93, 131, 190, 224, 304, 522
 Fiji Islands 3-4, 160, 248
 Florida 297 n., 300
 Fombina 492
 Forcados 40 n.
 Fort James 314
 Fouta Djallon *see* Futa Jallon
 France v-viii, 3-7, 11-13, 25, 31-2, 35, 37 n., 41, 57, 60, 62-7, 70, 73-7, 81, 90-1, 93-9, 105, 115, 117-18, 122 n., 137-8, 151-5, 157, 159-66, 168-9, 171, 173-5, 177-87, 190, 195, 197-9, 201-2, 204-6, 208-9, 211, 213 n.-214, 219, 225, 227, 229 n., 234-5, 238-40, 242-3, 248-53, 256, 260, 265, 268-70, 276-7, 296, 298-9, 301, 303, 314-16, 318-19, 323, 333, 337, 348, 350-1, 353, 356, 366, 368-9, 373, 377-8, 380-2, 385-93, 395-6, 402, 415, 459, 471, 473, 496, 508, 513-14, 529-30, 533-5, 538, 551
 Franceville 383
 Frankfurt 111 n., 113-15, 124-5, 135, 180 n., 283-4, 292, 297 n., 390
 Freetown 73, 522
 French Antilles 338
 French Empire 105, 175
 French Equatorial Africa 276
 French West Africa 63-4, 208, 410, 534
 Fulani states 491, 501, 512
 Futa Jallon 184, 202, 407-8, 522

 Gabon 17, 35, 40, 51, 53, 57, 66, 88, 95-7 n., 121, 171, 173-4, 181, 191, 195, 203, 225, 249-51, 304, 316, 380, 385
 Galam 314
 Gambia 40, 42, 56, 72, 75, 95, 173-4, 190, 195, 300, 314, 318
 Gbebe 459
 Gbehanzin *see* Benhazin
 Geneva 345
 German East Africa 80, 133-4, 143-5, 259, 415 n.-417, 432, 438-9
 German Empire 67, 106, 109-11, 119, 137, 291, 301, 389; *see also* Reich, German
 German Rwanda *see* German East Africa
 German South West Africa 37, 133-5, 143, 270, 365
 German West Africa *see* German South West Africa
 Ghana 289, 444 n., 520, 544, 547
 Glasgow 49-50, 379
 Glidji 518
 Goa 200, 223
 Gold Coast 36, 42, 44, 49 n., 56, 71-2, 190-1, 209 n., 269-70, 300, 315, 318, 454, 461, 519-20, 544

 Gombe 497, 499
 Gongola State 492
 Gorée, island of 314
 Grand Bassam 315
 Great Britain v-vii, 4-6, 8-9, 25-6, 31-2, 35, 38, 41-2, 44, 46 n.-47 n., 49-50, 54 n., 57, 60-7, 69-83, 95, 98-9, 105, 109, 115-18, 122 n.-124, 127, 129, 131, 134-5, 137, 140, 151, 153-5, 157-63, 166-7, 169, 171, 176-81, 183-4, 186, 189, 194-5, 197-201, 204-7, 209-10, 213 n.-214, 219, 222, 224-5, 240, 242-3, 248-51, 253, 255-6, 260, 265, 267-71, 276-8, 280, 287 n., 295-301, 304, 310, 314-16, 318-19, 323, 327, 330, 333-9, 342, 344, 348-53, 358 n., 365, 372 n., 377-96, 402, 415-17, 422-3, 426-7, 430, 432-3, 453, 455-6, 459-60, 466, 492, 496, 521-2, 527-30, 533-5, 537-8, 541, 546, 550
 Great Popo 315
 Guano islands 40
 Guinea 14, 25, 66, 88, 113, 160, 181, 195, 199, 202, 206, 226, 250, 314, 380, 385
 Guinea, gulf of 13, 225
 Gujba 499
 Gun kingdom 445, 447-8
 Gurin 498
 Gwandu 493, 495-6, 501, 503

 Hadejia 491-2, 498, 502
 Hague, The 371, 527
 Haiti 185, 522
 Hamburg 16, 36 n., 39, 44-5 n., 62, 66, 110, 121, 127-31, 135, 142, 158, 208, 248, 328, 339 n.-340, 344, 381-2, 516
 Hausaland 40, 411 n., 464, 491, 495-6, 499, 504
 Heidelberg 284
 Heligoland 135, 141
 Hereroland 128
 Holland *see* Netherlands

 Ibadan 28, 443, 445-6 n., 458, 462, 464, 505 n.
 Ibaka 482
 Iboko, river and region 480-2, 485
 Iboland 462, 465, 510, 521
 Idah 29
 Ife 56, 464
 Igbesa 446
 Igboland *see* Iboland
 Ijaye 443
 Ijebu 445-6, 454, 460, 462-3
 Ijebu-Ode 28, 407-8, 411
 Ikebuwa 457
 Ilaro 56, 449
 Ilebo 479, 486
 Île Bourbon *see* Réunion
 Ilorin 56, 408, 491, 494, 496
 Imperial Germany *see* Reich, German
 India 10, 38, 44, 70, 72, 108, 113, 265, 323-4, 381-2, 506, 539
 Indian Empire 338
 Indo-China 4, 8, 10
 Indonesia 70, 265, 528
 Iowa 286

- Ipeko 483
 Ipokia 447-9
 Ireland 428 n.
 Isangila 93, 97 n.
 Ischangi 417 n.
 Islandhlwana 199
 Isoko 461
 Italy 4, 32, 73-4, 137, 155, 198, 248, 256, 270, 296,
 301, 340, 342, 355, 378, 533, 535, 545
 Itsekiriland 454, 456-8, 460-1
 Ivory Coast 315, 317, 404, 444 n.

 Jama' 500
 Jamaica 93
 Japan 1, 265, 533, 536

 Kabinda *see* Cabinda
 Kaduna 503 n.-504
 Kagoro 491
 Kalabari 458
 Kano 26, 412, 464, 492-3, 495 n., 497, 499-501,
 503-5, 512
 Kansas 308
 Katanga 24, 307
 Katankoei 483
 Katsina 501-3, 505
 Katwe 426
 Kayonza 424
 Keffi 498-9, 501
 Kenya 71, 75, 81, 296
 Kényéby-Kura 513
 Keta 518
 Ketenou 315
 Khartoum 19, 500 n., 527
 Kigali 416, 423, 434
 Kigezi 428-33, 436, 439
 Kilimanjaro 13, 26
 Kinsembo 51
 Kinshasa 469-70, 488
 Kintambo 484, 488
 Kisangani 469-70
 Kisenyi 416-417 n.
 Kisoro 425, 429
 Kivu, Lake 415-18, 424, 427-9, 432, 434
 Kontagora 497, 499
 Kru Coast 318
 Kukuruku Hills 445
 Kütchük-Kainardchie 267
 Kwa 479
 Kwango River 91
 Kwengeng 405 n.
 Kwotto, Lake 501

 Lagos 28, 36, 40 n.-42, 44, 49 n.-50, 56-7, 61-3,
 68, 72-3, 190-1, 203, 207-9, 315, 339, 401, 445-7,
 449, 453, 455, 458, 462-3, 505, 519, 521 n., 543
 Landana 54, 88-9, 94-7
 Langson 528
 Latin America 69, 74-5, 123, 128, 210 n., 225
 Lebane *see* Ogowe
 Leeds 93, 379
 Le Havre 208

 Leopoldville 94, 299
 Leubo 306
 Levant 194, 199
 Liberia 57, 88, 185, 288, 298-9, 304, 315, 317, 522-3
 Libreville 35, 88, 95, 203
 Libya 539
 Liège 237
 Lisala 469
 Lisbon 3, 13, 53, 97, 193-4, 198, 200, 206-7, 212,
 218-23, 298
 Little Popo 268, 315
 Liverpool 29, 36 n., 38-9, 42, 49-50, 55, 61, 94,
 208-9 n., 259, 327, 379, 393, 395
 Loango 35, 96, 250-1
 Loa River 472
 Loge River 42, 54-5
 Lojé, River 251
 Loko 173
 Lokoja 459, 494-5, 501
 Lokolela 479, 486
 Lolonga 479
 London vii, 4-5, 9, 14, 49, 54-5, 66, 81, 99, 121, 125,
 135, 139, 154-5 n., 157, 162, 169, 175, 179-80, 187,
 190, 192-5, 197-8, 201-4, 206-8, 213, 268, 290,
 295, 298, 304, 310, 319, 327, 349, 372, 379, 382-3,
 503 n., 520, 545
 Lorraine 152
 Los, Isles de 203, 314
 Louemmé 234
 Lourenço Marques 53, 223
 Lualaba River 307
 Luanda 88, 220
 Lufu district 472
 Lukunga 94
 Lunda 36

 Mabale villages 481
 Madagali 491-2
 Madagascar 4, 76, 190, 194, 201-2, 304, 528
 Madrid 225
 Mahin 56, 316
 Majuba 53, 76
 Makoli 483
 Malawi 71, 410 n.
 Malebo, Pool *see* Stanley Pool
 Malembe 96
 Mali 513
 Malima 488
 Malta 236
 Manchester 3, 16, 42, 54, 56, 109, 207-9, 211, 247,
 327, 379
 Mandara 407
 Manga 482
 Mankanza 479-88
 Mannah River 315
 Manyanga 97 n.
 Marseilles 38-9, 173, 297
 Marua 498, 500
 Matadi 94
 Mauritania 314, 370, 448
 Mauritius 70, 73
 Mbandaka 479, 483

- Mbarara 427-9
 Mecca 499-500, 502
 Medina 172
 Mellacourie 317
 Metz 25
 Meuse, River 372
 Mexico 134
 Mfa *see* Brazzaville
 Mfua 488
 Mfumbiro, Mount 415-17, 421, 423, 426-7, 430, 432
 Middle East 152-4, 194
 Mikumbungu 94
 Minnesota 283, 297 n.
 Misau 499-500, 503
 Mississippi, River 303
 Moleke 483
 Molembo 183 n.
 Monaco 357
 Mona River 445, 447
 Mongolia 92
 Montoei 483
 Morocco 151, 225-6, 370, 397
 Mossamedes 88
 Mossi states 513
 Moumpanga 483
 Mozambique 13, 54, 189, 194, 200, 205, 207, 223,
 251, 276, 380, 442, 551
 Muhuvura 426, 428 n.-429
 Mulera 419, 421-3, 426, 433-4
 Munich 247
 Muri 493-4, 496, 501-3
 Musuku 93
 Mutanda, Lake 430
 Mweru, Lake 296
 Mytilene Islands, 230
- Namibia vii
 Nashville 284
 Nassarawa 501
 Natal 49, 75 n., 189, 339
 Ndebeleland 82
 Ndjole 35
 Ndorwa 439
 Near East 137, 199
 Nemlao-Banana 88
 Netherlands vii, 5, 41, 69, 142, 224, 340, 348, 538
 Netherlands Indies 528, 539
 New England 285, 287, 539
 New France 539
 New Guinea 3, 13, 32, 118, 120, 133-4, 139, 144,
 162, 532 n.
 New Spain 539
 New York 70, 247, 291, 298, 310
 New Zealand 71-2, 383
 Niari-Kwilu 95, 174, 176, 182-3, 235, 243, 250, 316
 Niger, river and region viii, 1, 9, 11, 13-15, 17, 22,
 27-32, 35-6, 40, 42-4, 49-54, 57-61, 65-7, 71, 74,
 77-80, 116, 165-7, 169, 171-6, 180-1, 183-5,
 190-1, 193, 199, 201-6, 212-13 n., 224-5, 249-50,
 253, 258, 260-1, 263, 272, 274, 277, 280, 319-20,
 328, 335, 339-42, 344, 372, 374, 378 n., 384-6, 390,
 395, 401, 408, 447, 454-5, 459, 461, 463, 494-6,
 505, 513, 528, 530, 541, 551
 Nigeria vii, ix, 40 n., 71, 80, 267, 280, 316, 343,
 403-4, 406, 413, 442-5, 449-50, 453-5, 456-60,
 462-7, 491, 494 n., 496-8, 502-6, 512-14, 522, 543
 Nile River 2, 4, 6, 14, 23-5, 31, 75 n.-76, 81, 91,
 213 n., 231, 296, 319, 416, 500
 Njassaland *see* Nyasaland
 Noki 88, 96, 98, 183 n.
 North Africa 49, 56, 75 n., 151, 226
 North America 70, 72, 86, 308, 322
 North East Africa 25
 Norway 347
 Nougoua 315
 Nupe 36, 494, 496
 Nyasaland 53, 82, 341
- Oder, River 292
 Ogowe 7, 35, 51, 53, 88, 94, 174, 180 n.-182, 385,
 477
 Ogun State 450
 Ohio 309
 Ogori-Ije 410
 Oil Rivers 28-9, 44, 51, 203, 335, 453, 455, 458-9
 Oke-Odan 447-9
 Okrika 463
 Olumo 477
 Onitsha 57
 Opobo 454, 458, 460-1, 516
 Oporto 218, 220, 224
 Orange River 49, 75 n., 88
 Ottoman Empire v, viii, 24, 151, 155, 267, 322, 544
 Ouidah 61
 Oyo, empire and state 28, 56, 408, 443-6, 454, 464
- Palabala 94
 Paraguay 119 n.
 Paraná, River 252, 372
 Paris 3-8, 11-12, 14, 53, 63, 66, 88, 96-7, 113, 177,
 182 n., 186, 197 n., 201, 203-5, 233, 238, 249, 252,
 286, 297, 314, 319, 372, 380, 513-14, 527
 Persia 384
 Philippines 225-6
 Podor 314
 Pointe-Noire 96
 Poland 17, 24
 Portendic 314
 Porto Novo 57, 315, 317, 445-50
 Porto Seguro 315
 Portugal v-vi, viii, 3, 5-6, 8 n., 11, 26, 41, 54 n.-55,
 65, 73, 76, 87, 93, 96, 98-9, 116-17, 127, 131, 151,
 153, 159-61, 163, 167, 177, 182-3, 193-5, 198-200,
 205-7, 209-13, 215-26, 240, 243, 251, 254-6, 265,
 269-70, 277, 298, 301, 314, 316, 330, 333-4, 348-9,
 379-81, 391, 402, 415, 530, 545, 551
 Portuguese Angola 44, 189
 Portuguese Empire 227
 Portuguese Guinea 314, 317
 Pretoria 26
 Principe 338
 Prussia 63-4, 95

- Puerto Rico 224-6
 Punta da Lenha 193

 Raba 459, 494
 Red Sea 4, 9-10, 13, 23, 334, 344
 Reich, German v-vi, viii, x, 3-9, 17, 21, 25-6, 31-2, 41, 60, 66-7, 73-4, 76-81, 105-7, 109, 111, 113-21, 123-6, 129-30, 132-4, 137-43, 146, 152-66, 168-9, 171, 177-8, 180-3, 186, 195, 197-8, 206, 210, 213 n.-214, 225, 230, 232, 241-3, 247-52, 255-6, 258, 260, 263, 265, 268-71, 276-7, 280-1, 286, 291-2, 296, 300-1, 303, 316-17, 323, 330, 335-6, 340, 344, 350-3, 356, 358 n., 366, 369, 377-94, 396, 402, 415-17, 419, 423, 427, 432, 459, 511, 517, 527-30, 532-3, 535, 545, 551
 Réunion 194, 338
 Rhine, River 292, 372
 Rhineland 112, 381
 Rhine-Main region 381
 Rhodesia 71, 81, 324, 328, 442
 Rift Valley 416
 Rio Campo 225, 316
 Rio Muni 225, 316
 Rio de Oro 370
 Rio del Rey 40 n., 316, 319
 Roman Empire 537
 Rome 88, 91, 97
 Rotterdam 16, 247
 Rubona 428-30
 Ruhengiri 420, 423, 426, 434
 Runyarwanda 423
 Russia 31-2, 73, 119, 137-8, 154-5, 165, 169, 186, 216, 266-8, 276, 290, 296, 351 n., 378, 388, 390, 528-9, 533, 536-7, 544
 Rutshuru 423-6, 428
 Rwanda 416-27, 431, 434-40
 Rwaza 421-2

 Sabinio, Mount 432
 Sahara 36, 71, 172, 225-6, 267, 280, 284, 316, 334, 354, 358 n., 370
 Sahel belt 499, 515
 St John 236
 St Joseph de Linzolo 97
 St Louis 26, 172, 314, 411
 St Lucia Bay 20 n.
 St Paul de Loanda 88
 St Petersburg 284, 297 n.
 Samoa 13, 113, 124, 134
 Sanaga River 40
 Sanford 297 n.
 San Antonio 88, 96 n.
 Sangha 40
 San Salvador 88, 93, 98
 São Tomé 219, 338
 Saragossa 348
 Satiru 491-2, 498
 Saxony 122
 Scarcies 317
 Scheldt, River 372
 Sebe 450, 518

 Seboire 498
 Seine, River 527
 Senaar 500
 Senegal 30, 35, 39, 49, 53, 65-6, 88, 172-3, 175, 181, 184, 194-5, 201-3, 208, 250, 314, 318, 380, 385, 409, 512-13, 519
 Senegal, River 314, 385, 401, 407
 Senegambia 44, 318
 Sette Cama 182, 220, 250-1
 Shark's point 304
 Shonga 459
 Siberia 354
 Sierra Leone 42, 56, 65, 71-2, 88, 127, 129 n., 131, 173, 175, 201, 203, 300, 314-15, 339, 401-3, 509, 513-14, 518-19, 521-3
 Sikasso 408
 Sine-Saloum 329
 Singapore 70
 Skierniewice 386, 390
 Slave Coast 190
 Sokoto 275, 405-8, 411-12, 454, 459-60, 462-3, 491-4, 496-7, 499-504, 512
 Solingen 127
 Somalia 194
 Somaliland 74, 189, 335
 Song 499
 South Africa 6, 13-14, 20, 24-6, 32, 38, 53, 56, 70, 74, 76, 122, 189, 197, 213 n., 339, 344, 388, 406, 408, 443, 508, 539
 South America *see* Latin America
 Southampton 61
 South East Asia 17, 225
 South West Africa 6, 37, 40, 54, 76, 79, 105, 116, 119, 121, 124, 126, 128, 131, 135-6, 141, 146, 158, 198-9, 349, 369, 382, 388
 Soviet Union 267, 533
 Spain 5, 26, 69, 131, 142, 215-17, 220, 224-6, 248, 254, 269-70, 316, 333, 348-9, 370, 380
 Spandau 513
 Spanish America *see* Latin America
 Spanish Antilles 226
 Spree, River 527
 Stanley Falls 260, 290, 482, 485
 Stanley Pool 14, 17, 35, 88, 91, 93-9, 174, 182-3, 204, 206, 239, 260, 473, 477, 486 n.-488
 Stanleyville 283
 Sudan 10, 13, 23, 36, 74, 91, 155, 171, 174-5, 185, 276, 313, 402-4, 407, 409, 441, 500, 512-13, 522 n., 539
 Suez Canal 4, 5, 14, 178, 187 n., 189, 225, 267, 529
 Sura 491
 Sweden 347, 528
 Switzerland vii, 301

 Tabora 91, 439
 Tanganyika, Lake 91, 238, 244, 276, 296, 307, 317, 415-16, 420
 Tchad, Lake 173
 Teke kingdom 471, 478
 Tennessee 284, 291
 Tientsin 390

- Timbuktu 26, 35, 172-3, 175
 Tiv 492
 Togo 13, 57, 76, 105, 116, 125, 131, 134, 143, 146,
 159, 166, 315, 445, 517-18
 Tokolor Empire 406
 Tonga 13, 410 n., 514 n.
 Tonking 230, 390
 Tordesillas 269, 348
 Transvaal 6, 13, 50, 53, 55, 75 n., 197-8, 200, 283
 Tripoli 545
 Tschiloango 234
 Tumbuka 410 n.
 Tunis 26, 137
 Tunisia v, 152-5, 248, 534
 Turkey 32, 134, 169, 210 n., 230 n., 261, 351 n., 378,
 397

 Ubangi 40
 Ubangi-Shari *see* French Equatorial Africa
 Uganda 71, 75, 296, 417, 427, 432-3, 439-40
 Ukwuani 461
 United Kingdom *see* Great Britain
 United States of America v-vii, 1, 12, 41, 71, 73, 75,
 123, 151, 164, 177, 197, 224, 230, 232-3, 240-2,
 247, 255-6 n., 265-6, 277, 279, 281-2, 284-9,
 291-2, 295-311, 316, 322, 327, 336-7, 340, 342,
 372 n., 378, 380, 392, 394, 533, 536, 542, 545
 Upper Volta 404, 444 n., 513
 Urhobo 461-2
 Uruguay, River 252, 372
 Usumbura 416, 420

 Varzin 7, 241, 249
 Vatican 23, 211
 Verona 91
 Verre 491
 Versailles 314, 318
 Victoria, Lake 75 n., 80, 91, 296, 316, 415, 427, 432
 Victoria-Nyanza 91
 Vienna 151, 165, 252, 257, 260, 267, 272, 288, 301,
 325, 333, 343, 371-2, 380, 527
 Vietnam 404, 534
 Virginia 306
 Vistula, River 292
 Vitu 213 n.
 Vivi 88, 93-4, 472

 Walvis Bay 128, 159, 358 n.
 Wangata 480-1, 483-5
 Warri 40 n.
 Wase 494, 496
 Washington 233, 301, 303
 Waterloo 328
 Weme River 445
 Weser, River 292
 West Africa v, vii-ix, 1-6, 9, 13-14, 22-6, 32, 35-50,
 53, 55-7, 59-68, 70, 75, 77, 86, 88-9, 93, 95, 105,
 110, 113, 116-21, 127, 130-4, 137, 139-45, 151-3,
 158-71, 173, 177-8, 180-1, 185, 189-92 n., 194-5,
 197, 199, 201-2, 205, 214, 218-19, 249, 263, 265 n.,
 267 n., 269-70, 277, 279-80, 282, 287, 300, 303-4,
 314, 317, 326, 329, 339-40, 344, 378-82, 386, 388-9,
 395, 401-2, 404-5, 407, 411-12, 441-2, 444, 446-7,
 450-1, 460, 492, 494 n., 507-9, 513-15, 519-20,
 522-3, 530, 541, 543, 547, 549, 551-2
 Westphalia 112
 Wetanyenyi 483
 Whydah 316
 Wiesbaden 283, 292
 Württemberg 314

 Yalta x, 533
 Yandaka gate 501
 Yauri 503
 Yellala, falls of 20
 Yola 492 n.-494, 496-8, 500-3
 Yorkshire 327
 Yorubaland ix, 28, 37, 40, 56, 407 n.-408, 411,
 441-51, 453-5, 458, 462, 464, 466, 521
 Yoruba-Oyo Empire 267

 Zaïre vii, ix, 92, 276, 280, 469, 473, 489
 Zaïre, River 88
 Zambezi, river and region 16, 35, 53, 55, 82, 223,
 251, 339, 415
 Zanzibar 9-10, 13-14, 16, 26, 71, 74-5 n., 80-1,
 91, 141, 144, 147, 189, 194, 198, 238, 251, 261,
 275-6, 287, 291, 296, 300, 321, 325, 347, 415
 Zaria 500, 503-5
 Zimbabwe 442 n., 508
 Zinder 411
 Zou River 450
 Zululand 20 n., 199, 213 n.

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Franz Ansprenger is Professor for International Politics and head of the Department of African Politics at the Free University of Berlin. He has published widely on African modern history and politics. His publications include *Auflösung der Kolonialreiche*, Munich 1981, 4th edition.

Anthony I. Asiwaju is Professor of History at the University of Lagos and editor of the *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*. In addition to several other publications, particularly on borderlands studies, he is the author of *Western Yorubaland under European Rule, 1889–1945: A Comparative Analysis of French and British Colonialism*, London 1976.

Klaus J. Bade is Professor of Modern History, University of Osnabrück. He has published widely on the history of imperialism as well as international and internal migration. His publications include *Friedrich Fabri und der Imperialismus in der Bismarckzeit: Revolution—Depression—Expansion*, Freiburg 1975.

Elfi Bendikat is lecturer at the Otto-Suhr-Institute at the Free University of Berlin. Her publications on the history of imperialism include *Organisierte Kolonialbewegung in der Bismarckzeit*, Heidelberg 1984.

Gervase Clarence-Smith teaches African and 'Third World' history at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He is the author of *The Third Portuguese Empire, 1825–1975*, Manchester 1985.

Geoffrey de Courcel, grandson of the French ambassador in Berlin at the time of the Africa Conference, looks back on a successful diplomatic career during which he was also France's ambassador in London (1962–72). He is now *Président de l'Institut Charles de Gaulle*. In 1935 he published *L'influence de la Conférence de Berlin sur le droit colonial international*.

Michael Crowder is Visiting Professor at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London and at Amherst College, Massachusetts. He has published and edited widely on the history of West Africa, for example *West Africa under Colonial Rule*, London 1968.

Peter Duignan is Senior Fellow, Lillick Curator, and Director of African–Middle East Studies at the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, Stanford, California. His publications include (with L. H. Gann) *The United States of Africa: A History*, Cambridge 1984.

Jörg Fisch is Professor of Modern History at the University of Zurich. He is a specialist on the history of international law as well as the history of the expansion of Europe. He is the author of *Die europäische Expansion und das Völkerrecht. Die Auseinandersetzungen um den Status der überseeischen Gebiete vom 15. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*, Stuttgart 1984.

John Flint is Professor of Modern History, Dalhousie University, Canada. His many publications on modern African history include, *Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria*, London 1960.

- Stig Förster* was a Research Fellow at the German Historical Institute London. His publications on German military history include *Der doppelte Militarismus: Die deutsche Heeresrüstungspolitik zwischen Status-quo-Sicherung und Aggression*, Stuttgart 1985. He is now specializing in the history of British imperialism in India.
- Louis H. Gann* is a Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, California. He has published and edited extensively on colonialism in Africa and related topics, as for example his trilogy (with Peter Duignan) on the rulers of German, British, and Belgian Africa.
- Immanuel Geiss*, Professor of Modern History at the University of Bremen, has published and edited on the history of the First World War and other topics. He is also the author of *The Pan-African Movement*, London 1973.
- Horst Gründer*, Professor of Modern History, University of Münster, specializes in international relations, colonialism, and the history of Christian missions. His publications in these fields include *Christliche Mission und deutscher Imperialismus: Eine politische Geschichte ihrer Beziehungen während der deutschen Kolonialzeit (1884-1914) unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Afrikas und Chinas*, Paderborn 1982.
- John Hargreaves*, Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Aberdeen, has published widely on the history of European imperialism in Africa. His works include *West Africa Partitioned*, 2 vols., London 1974-85.
- Elizabeth Hopkins* is Professor of Anthropology at Smith College, Northampton, Mass., USA. She has done important anthropological field work in South West Uganda, on which she published several articles. She is co-author of *World Family Patterns*, 1971.
- Obaro Ikime* is Professor of History at the University of Ibadan. He is a specialist on the history of Nigeria. His many publications include *Merchant Prince of the Niger Delta*, London 1968, and *The Fall of Nigeria*, London 1977.
- A. S. Kanya-Forstner* is Professor of History and Associate Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies at York University, Toronto. His numerous publications on French imperialism include *The Conquest of Western Sudan: A Study in French Military Imperialism*, Cambridge 1969.
- Anthony Kirk-Greene*, lecturer on the Modern History of Africa and Fellow of St Antony's College, Oxford, was a District Officer in Northern Nigeria prior to 1961. He is the author of numerous books and articles on African history, politics, and government. His publications include *The Emirates of Northern Nigeria*, London 1966.
- Suzanne Miers* is Professor of History at Ohio University. Besides other topics she has worked on humanitarian problems connected with European colonialism. She is the author of *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, London 1975.
- Wolfgang J. Mommsen*, Professor of Modern and Contemporary History at the University of Düsseldorf, was Director of the German Historical Institute from 1977 until 1985. He has published extensively on British and German history and the problems of European imperialism. His publications include *Theories of Imperialism*, London 1980.
- Mumbanza mwa Bawele*, Professor of History, is *Directeur Général des Presses Universitaires du Zaïre* at Kinshasa and *Maître de Recherche au Centre de Recherche Sciences Humaines*. His more than fifty publications include important articles on the history of Zaïre.

Colin Newbury is University Lecturer in Commonwealth History at the University of Oxford and a Fellow of Linacre College. He is editor and author of a number of works on West African history, including *The Western Slave Coast and its Rulers*, Oxford 1961.

Alexander D. Nzemeke is Senior Lecturer on African and European History at the University of Benin, Nigeria. His publications include *British Imperialism and African Response: The Niger Valley, 1851-1905*, Paderborn 1982.

Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann is Fellow and Praelector of University College, Oxford. He has published on German imperialism, domestic politics, and industrial interests as well as German-Russian industrial relations. He is the author (with Imanuel Geiss) of *Die Erforderlichkeit des Unmöglichen: Deutschland am Vorabend des Ersten Weltkrieges*, Frankfurt 1965.

Ronald Robinson is former Beit Professor of the History of the British Commonwealth and Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford. With the late John A. Gallagher he is co-author of *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism*, London 1961. In addition, he has published most extensively on European imperialism in Africa and on the theory of imperialism.

George Shepperson was until 1986 William Robertson Professor of Commonwealth and American History and is now Emeritus Professor at the University of Edinburgh. His numerous publications include books on *Independent Africa* and *David Livingstone*.

Jean Stengers is Professor of Contemporary History at the University of Brussels and a Member of the Belgian Royal Academy. He has written extensively on Leopold II and the Congo, Belgian history, and international relations. Among his most recent publications is *Émigration et immigration en Belgique au XIX^e et au XX^e siècles*, 1978.

G. N. Uzoigwe is Professor of History, Head of the Department of History, and Dean of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Calabar, Nigeria. He is also Vice-President of the Historical Society of Nigeria. His many publications on African history include *Britain and the Conquest of Africa* (1970).

H. L. Wesseling is Professor of History at the University of Leiden, Netherlands, and Director of the Centre for the History of European Expansion. In addition to numerous articles and books on European and overseas history he has published *Soldaat en Krijger: Franse opvattingen over leger en Oorlog 1905-14*, 1969.



